

# THE BURIAL OF JESUS

# The Burial of Jesus

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Cover: “Scenes from the Life of Christ: Entombment.” 15th century illuminated manuscript. Jean Colombe Pol de Limbourg.

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What do we know about where Jesus may have died and where he was buried? This collection of articles from the pages of *Biblical Archaeology Review* and *Bible Review* magazines presents the latest in scholarship on those key subjects.

In "What Did Jesus' Tomb Look Like?" Jodi Magness traces the evolution of Jewish burial customs from before the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C. to the first century A.D., noting in particular the differences between the burials of the wealthy and those of the poor.

Amos Kloner examines one specific aspect of Jewish burial caves when he asks "Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?" Kloner also notes that in the first century A.D. it was the common custom among Jews to return to a tomb three days after a burial to confirm that the relative they had just interred there was indeed dead.

Where was Jesus buried? That key question is addressed in three articles: In "Does the Holy Sepulchre Mark the Burial of Jesus?" Dan Bahat lays out the case for the traditional location.

Another spot that has been championed as the final resting place of Jesus is examined in depth by Gabriel Barkay in "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?" Barkay includes a detailed description of this spot, which is popular with some pilgrims.

Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, in "The Garden Tomb and the Misfortunes of an Inscription," recounts the strange tale of an inscription that was once touted as proving that Jesus was indeed buried in the Garden Tomb.

What were Jewish burials like in the era before Jesus? Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner guide us through "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," noting how Jewish burial customs changed significantly over the centuries.

This collection concludes with a consideration of the relatives of Jesus, many of whom are little known today though they are mentioned, albeit briefly, in the New Testament and in the earliest Christian writings. Learn about this obscure, though important, aspect of Jesus' life in Richard Bauckham's "All in the Family."

# What Did Jesus' Tomb Look Like?

## By Jodi Magness



Photo by Garo Nalbandian/Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb..." (Luke 24:1–2). The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) agree that Jesus was laid in a tomb that had a rolling stone closing the entrance, much like this Herodian-era tomb from the necropolis under the Convent of the Sisters of Nazareth in Nazareth. The Gospels also record that when the women came to anoint the body, the stone had been rolled away. In the accompanying article, author Jodi Magness discusses the burial customs of first-century C.E. Jerusalem and finds that the Biblical account of Jesus' burial matches what we know from archaeological evidence.

According to the Gospels, Jesus died and was removed from the cross on a Friday afternoon, the eve of the Jewish Sabbath. A wealthy follower named Joseph of Arimathea requested Pontius Pilate's permission to remove Jesus' body from the cross and bury him before sundown, in accordance with Jewish law. Because there was no time to prepare a grave before the Sabbath, Joseph placed Jesus' body in his own family's tomb.

The reliability of the Gospel accounts—which were written a generation or two after Jesus' death—is debated by scholars. Most discussions have focused on literary and historical considerations, such as the composition dates of the Gospels and internal contradictions and differences between them. Here, I will consider the account of Jesus' burial in light of the archaeological evidence. I believe that the Gospel accounts accurately reflect the manner in which the Jews of ancient Jerusalem buried their dead in the first century.



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Headrests adorn a burial bench in a late Iron Age (eighth-sixth century B.C.E.) tomb at Ketef Hinnom, northwest of Jerusalem's Old City. Tombs in ancient Jerusalem were a family affair mainly for the city's well-to-do. Iron Age tombs were hewn in the bedrock around the city and consisted of several chambers containing rock-cut benches upon which the bodies of the deceased were placed. After the bodies had decomposed, the bones would be removed from the benches and placed in a pit or repository to make way for new burials.



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Tombs in ancient Jerusalem were a family affair mainly for the city's well-to-do. Iron Age tombs were hewn in the bedrock around the city and consisted of several chambers containing rock-cut benches upon which the bodies of the deceased were placed. After the bodies had decomposed, the bones would be removed from the benches and placed in a pit or repository to make way for new burials. In the photo, student excavators with their heads in the stone headrests demonstrate how the bodies were laid out in the First Temple period.

Wealthy Jews in ancient Jerusalem buried their dead in tombs cut into the bedrock slopes around the city. These rock-cut tombs were used by Jerusalem's Jewish elite only in times when they enjoyed an autonomous or semi-autonomous status. With few exceptions, the tombs were located outside the walls of the city. Each tomb was used by a family over the course of several generations, as reflected in the Biblical expression "He slept and was gathered to his fathers" (Judges 2:10; 2 Chronicles 34:28, etc.)

When a member of the family died, the body was wrapped in a shroud, sometimes placed in a coffin and laid in the tomb, even if the bones were later collected and placed elsewhere (either in a separate repository, as in the First Temple period, or, in a later period, in a bone box called an ossuary). Because of the expense associated with hewing a burial cave out of bedrock, however, only upper class and upper-middle class Jerusalemites could afford rock-cut tombs. The poorer members of Jerusalem's population apparently disposed of their dead in a manner that has left few traces in the archaeological record, for example in simple individual trench graves dug into the ground.

Rock-cut tombs of the late First Temple period (eighth-seventh century B.C.E.) typically consist of one or more burial chambers entered through a small, unadorned opening cut into the bedrock. Each burial chamber is lined with rock-cut benches along three sides on which the bodies of the deceased were laid. Frequently a pit carved beneath one of the benches was used as a repository for the bones of earlier burials; when the benches became filled with bodies, the remains (skeletons and grave gifts) were placed in the repository to make space for new burials on the burial benches.

An undisturbed repository in the Ketef Hinnom cemetery (overlooking the Hinnom Valley, northwest of the Old City) contained large numbers of skeletons as well as the burial gifts that accompanied them, including ceramic vases and oil lamps, jewelry, seals, a rare early coin and two silver amulets.[a] Many of the decorative elements in these burial caves, such as the carved headrests on the benches, reflect Egyptian styles transmitted directly from Egypt or through Phoenician intermediaries. We shall see foreign cultural influences and fashions again reflected in burials of a later period.

After the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple in 586 B.C.E., archaeological evidence for Jewish burial caves reappears only in the Hasmonean period, when Jerusalem again came under Jewish rule. As a result of the Maccabean Revolt in the mid-second century B.C.E., an independent Jewish kingdom ruled by the Hasmonean dynasty was established by the brothers of Judah Maccabee. Although Judah Maccabee and his brothers were renowned for their opposition to the introduction of Hellenistic (Greek) culture, the Hasmonean rulers nevertheless Hellenized their kingdom soon after its establishment. This is perhaps best illustrated by the monumental family tomb and victory memorial built by Simon (Judah Maccabee's youngest brother) in their hometown of Modiin, in which he interred the remains of his parents and brothers. Although no archaeological remains of this tomb survive, the descriptions of ancient literary sources, including the Book of Maccabees and the first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus,

leave little doubt that it was inspired by the tomb of King Mausolus of Caria—the so-called Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (now modern Bodrum on the southwest coast of Turkey)—which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world:

> And Simon built a monument over the grave of his father and his brothers, and made it high so that it could be seen, with polished stone on back and front. And he erected seven pyramids in a row, for his father and his mother and his four brothers. And he made devices for these, setting up great trophies of armor for an everlasting memorial, and beside the armor carved prows of ships, so that they could be seen by all who sailed the sea. Such was the monument that he built at Modiin, and that still stands today" (1 Maccabees 13:27–30).

However, Simon sent some to the city Basca to bring away his brother's bones, and buried them in their own city Modiin; and all the people made great lamentation over him. Simon also erected a very large monument for his father and his brethren, of white and polished stone, and raised it to a great height, and so as to be seen a long way off, and made cloisters about it, and set up pillars, which were of one stone apiece; a work it was wonderful to see. Moreover, he built seven pyramids also for his parents and his brethren, one for each of them, which were made very surprising, both for their largeness and beauty, and which have been preserved to this day (Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.6.6).

These descriptions indicate that, like the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the tomb of the Maccabees consisted of a tall podium with a temple-like building surrounded by columns and capped by a pyramidal roof (or in the case of the tomb of the Maccabees, seven pyramids, one for each family member, including Simon himself). As archaeologist Andrea Berlin has pointed out, none of these features is found in earlier Jewish or Phoenician tombs in Palestine.[1] The tomb of the Maccabees retains the ancient tradition of family burial in a rock-cut tomb but adds Greek-style exterior decoration and a monumental marker. The Jews referred to such monumental tomb markers as a *nefesh* (Hebrew for "soul").

Hellenistic influence on the Hasmoneans can also be seen in their adoption of Greek names, beginning with Simon's immediate successor, who preferred the Greek name John Hyrcanus over his Hebrew name Yohanan.[2]

A Hasmonean-period tomb in Jerusalem called Jason's Tomb demonstrates that Jerusalem's elite soon imitated the new tomb style introduced by Simon. Jason's Tomb is located in the western Jerusalem neighborhood of Rehavia[3] and is so called because a graffito incised on one of the walls asks the visitor to lament the death of Jason.[4] Jason's Tomb continues the earlier tradition of rock-cut burial caves in Jerusalem, but with several Hellenistic innovations: A large stone pyramid (an example of a *nefesh*) was constructed above the tomb. The tomb was approached through a series of long, open courtyards leading to a porch in the front of



*Richard Nowitz*

This photo, from the tombs at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, shows a headrest carved like the head of the Egyptian goddess Hathor.



*Private Collection, Archives Charmet/Bridgeman Art Library*

One of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus was the inspiration for the grand Hellenistic tomb erected by Simon Maccabee, younger brother of Judah Maccabee, for the family tomb and victory memorial he erected in Modiin, the family's home town. The Modiin tomb, in turn, helped spread Hellenistic styles to Jersualem tombs in the Hasmonean Period, the era of Maccabee-family rule (152-37 B.C.E.). Neither the Mausoleum nor the tomb of the Maccabees survive, but other examples, such as Jason's Tomb in central modern Jerusalem and the tomb of Zacharias from the necropolis in the Kidron Valley preserve Hellenistic architectural elements.

the tomb that was supported by a single Doric (Greek-style) column. This column was set between the projecting ends of the porch walls (an arrangement described in Greek architecture as *in-antis*; the *antae* are the ends of the porch walls). The porch gives access to two rooms: a burial chamber and a charnel room. Instead of having rock-cut benches like the First Temple period tombs, the burial chamber in Jason's Tomb has *loculi* (in Hebrew *kokhim*). *Loculi* are long niches that were cut into the walls, each for an individual burial. Like the pyramidal marker and the porch with a column, *loculi* reflect Hellenistic influence. *Loculi* are common in tombs at Alexandria in Egypt, which was the cultural center of the Hellenistic world. They make their first known appearance in Palestine at Maresha, a site south of Jerusalem that was inhabited by Hellenized Phoenicians from Sidon and by Idumeans (descendants of the Biblical Edomites).

Instead of depositing the remains of earlier burials in a pit or repository (to make room for more burials), as in the First Temple period tombs, the bones cleared out of the *loculi* in Jason's Tomb were placed in a charnel room. Beginning in about 20-10 B.C.E., the practice of placing bones from the *loculi* in a charnel room or pit changed to placing the bones in stone boxes called ossuaries. Ossuaries remained common in rock-cut tombs in Jerusalem until the destruction of the city by the Romans in 70 C.E.



*Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY*

The Tomb of Zacharias has a pyramidal roof and is decorated with a façade of engaged Ionic columns.



*Todd Bolen/bibleplaces.com*

Jason's Tomb, so called because it contains a graffito with that name, was built with a Doric column ***in antis***—between two walls of the porch. A pyramidal roof and ***loculi*** (niches carved in the walls to hold the bodies) are also Greek touches.

Most of the features that appear in Jason's Tomb remained characteristic of Jewish rock-cut tombs in Jerusalem until the end of the Second Temple period in 70 C.E.: a porch in front of the tomb's entrance, sometimes with two columns *in-antis*; *loculi* cut into the walls of the burial chambers; and a large pyramidal, conical or columnar marker constructed over the tomb. In addition, the use of ossuaries replaced the charnel room. Rock-cut tombs with these features surround Jerusalem on the north, east and south. Well-known examples include the Tomb of Bene Hezir in the Kidron Valley, the Tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene (the so-called Tomb of the Kings) near the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem, the Sanhedria tombs (in the modern neighborhood of Sanhedria, in north Jerusalem) and Nicanor's Tomb on Mount Scopus.

When Jesus' body was removed from the cross on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath (Matthew 27:57–59, 28:1; Mark 15:33–34, 42–43; Luke 23:44, 50–54; John 19:31), his followers, all observant Jews, were faced with a problem. Jewish law requires burial within 24 hours (Deuteronomy 21:22), and burials are prohibited on the Sabbath. Therefore Jesus had to be buried before sundown on Friday, when the Jewish Sabbath begins. Since there was no time to prepare a grave before the beginning of the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus' body in his family's rock-cut tomb. The Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) are in broad agreement in their description of this event:[5]

> Although it was now evening, yet since it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a highly respected member of the council, who was himself living in expectation of the reign of God, made bold to go to Pilate and ask for Jesus' body … And he [Joseph] brought a linen sheet and took him down from the cross and wrapped him in the sheet, and laid him in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the doorway of the tomb (Mark 15:42–46).

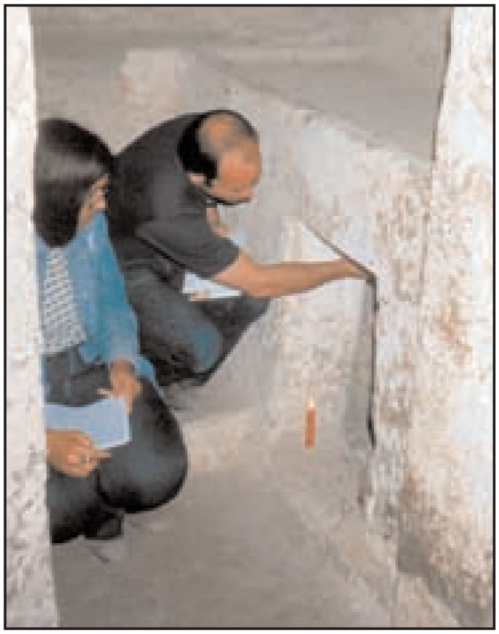
> In the evening a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, who had himself been a disciple of Jesus, came. He went to Pilate and asked him for Jesus' body … Then Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a piece of clean linen, and laid it in a new tomb that belonged to him, that he had cut in the rock, and he rolled a great stone over the doorway of the tomb, and went away (Matthew 27:57-60).

Today many scholars believe that since crucifixion was a sadistic and humiliating form of corporal punishment reserved by the Romans for the lower classes (including slaves), Jesus "died a criminal's death on the tree of shame."[6] John Dominic Crossan, for example, argues that Jesus would not have been buried at all, but would have been eaten by dogs. In my opinion, the notion that Jesus was unburied or buried in disgrace is based on a misunderstanding of the archaeological evidence and of Jewish law. Jesus was condemned by the Roman authorities for crimes against Rome, not by the Sanhedrin (Jewish council) for violating Jewish law. The Romans used crucifixion to maintain peace and order and punish rebellious provincials for incitement to rebellion and acts of treason. Although victims of crucifixion were sometimes left on their crosses for days, this was not usually the case.[7] According to the Gospel accounts, Pontius Pilate approved Joseph of Arimathea's request to remove Jesus' body from the cross for burial. Presumably Joseph had to make this special request because he wanted to ensure that Jesus received a proper burial before the beginning of the Sabbath.

After Judea came under direct Roman rule with Pompey's conquest in 63 B.C.E., crucifixion was imposed only by the Roman authorities. Those found guilty by the Sanhedrin of violating Jewish law were executed by stoning (like Jesus' brother James), or were burned, decapitated or strangled: "Four modes of execution

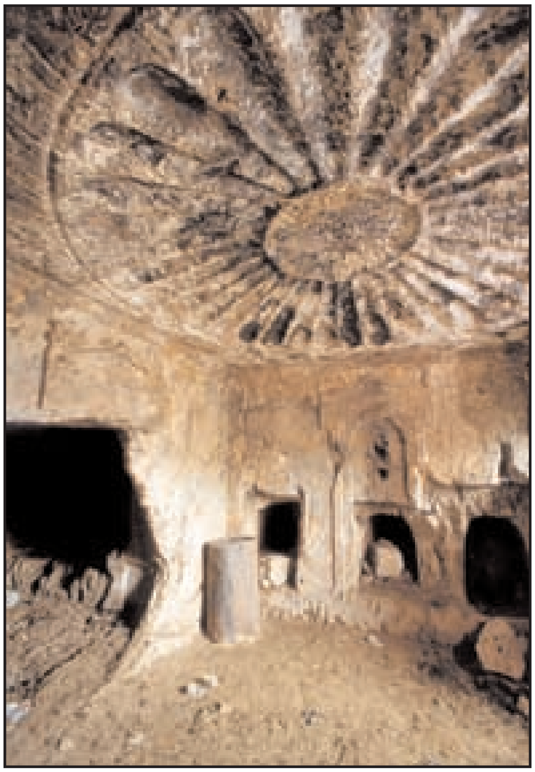


*Richard Nowitz*



*www.holylandphotos.org*

A repository was the preferred method of storing the bones of deceased family members until the practice of placing remains in ossuaries arose in the first century B.C.E. Sometimes the rock-carved pits were located directly beneath the rock-carved benches that first held the bodies, as at Ketef Hinnom. After a period of time, the bones would be removed from the bench and placed in the charnel pit, allowing the bench to be reused. A side view (top photo) shows the charnel pit. Two archaeologists are shown in the bottom photo peering into the charnel pit at the Ecole Biblique tombs.



Garo Nalbandian

Like a hovering spaceship, an elegant ceiling rosette decorates a burial chamber in a Second Temple period tomb in Akeldama, south of Jerusalem's Old City. Three ***loculi***, or burial niches for the initial burial of the deceased, were carved into the far wall. After the flesh decayed, the bones were placed in ossuaries (bone boxes). The practice of placing bones in an ossuary instead of a rock-cut pit became a common practice from the end of the first century B.C.E. until the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

were given in the court: stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:1). According to Biblical law (Deuteronomy 21:22), the bodies of executed criminals could be hanged for the purpose of public display only after they were already dead. The hanging of an already executed criminal is described in the Mishnah (the legal corpus of rabbinic Judaism) as follows: "How do they hang him? They drive a post into the ground, and a beam juts out from it, and they tie together his two hands, and thus do they hang him" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:4). This passage describes the hands of the deceased being tied together and the body dangling from a pole. In contrast, Roman crucifixion involved spreading apart the arms of a live victim so that he or she could be affixed to the crossbeam by ropes or nails.[8]

The following passage from Josephus indicates that the Jews buried victims of Roman crucifixion in accordance with Jewish law: "Nay, they proceeded to that degree of impiety, as to cast away their bodies without burial, although the Jews used to take so much care of the burial of men, that they took down those that were condemned and crucified, and buried them before the going down of the sun" (*Jewish War* 4.5.2).

The Mishnah attaches no stigma to crucifixion by the Roman authorities and does not prohibit victims of crucifixion from being buried with their families. In contrast, felons who were executed for violating Jewish law could not be buried in family tombs or burial grounds: "And they did not bury [the felon] in the burial grounds of his ancestors. But there were two graveyards made ready for the use of the court, one for those who were beheaded or strangled, and one for those who were stoned or burned" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:5).

Only one crucifixion victim—a man named Yehohanan—has ever been discovered and identified by archaeologists.[9] Yehohanan's remains were found in an ossuary in a rock-cut tomb in Jerusalem. According to Crossan, Yehohanan's interment in a rock-cut family tomb is "exceptional and extraordinary" because victims of crucifixion would not have received an honorable burial.[10] However, as I have just shown, Jewish law does *not* prohibit the burial of victims of crucifixion in family tombs. Crossan argues that "with all those thousands of people crucified around Jerusalem in the first century alone, we have so far found only a single crucified skeleton, and that, of course, preserved in an ossuary. Was burial then, the exception rather than the rule, the extraordinary rather than the ordinary case?"[11]

In my opinion, the exact opposite is the case: The discovery of the identifiable remains of even a single victim of crucifixion is exceptional. Crossan's assumption that we should have the physical (archaeological) remains of additional crucified victims is erroneous for several reasons. First, with one exception (the repository in the late First Temple period cemetery at Ketef



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Cut into the rock along the Kidron Valley, the tomb of the Bene Hezir family is another example of a rock-hewn tomb with Hellenistic features. Cut out of solid rock, the tomb is decorated with two Doric columns and a carved lintel. The tomb belonged to a wealthy family of priests mentioned in 1 Chronicles 24:15 and Nehemiah 10:20.

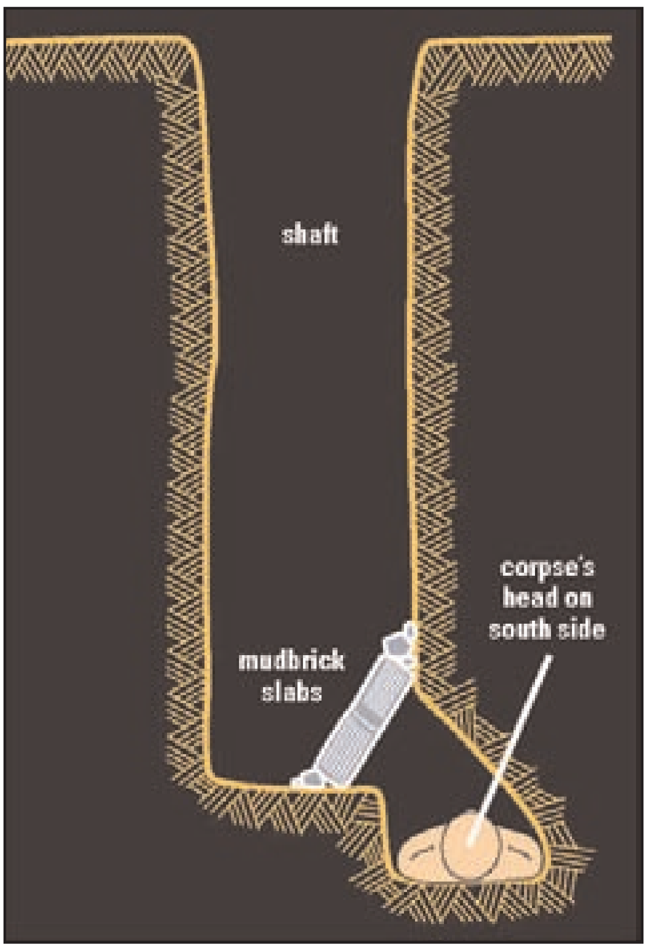
Hinnom referred to earlier), not a single undisturbed tomb in Jerusalem has ever been discovered and excavated by archaeologists. This means that even in cases where tombs or ossuaries still contain the original physical remains, the skeletons are often disturbed, damaged or incomplete. Second, the wealthy Jerusalemites who owned rock-cut tombs with ossuaries favored the preservation of the status quo through accommodation with the Romans. Presumably, relatively few of them were executed by crucifixion. Instead, the majority of victims crucified by the Romans belonged to the lower classes—precisely those who could not afford rock-cut tombs. Third, and most important, the nail in Yehohanan's heel was preserved only because of a fluke. As one authority has observed:



*Israel Museum/P. Lanyi*

The crucified ankle bone of a man named Yehohanan is the only archaeological evidence yet found of the Roman practice of crucifixion. Some scholars have claimed that because Jesus was crucified and died a criminal, he would not have received a formal burial in a grave or tomb. Jewish custom, however, permitted the burial in family tombs of those condemned to death by Roman law. The Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court, did not crucify those sentenced to death for violating Jewish law. Therefore, there was nothing about Jesus' death that would have precluded a proper Jewish burial. Yehohanan's ankle bone, found in an ossuary in a rock-cut family tomb in Jerusalem, provides archaeological evidence that crucifixion victims could be buried in a Jewish family tomb.

> The most dramatic evidence that this young man was crucified was the nail which penetrated his heel bones. But for this nail, we might never have discovered that the young man had died in this way. *The nail was preserved only because it hit a hard knot when it was pounded into the olive wood upright of the cross.* The olive wood knot was so hard that, as the blows on the nail became heavier, the end of the nail bent and curled. We found a bit of the olive wood (between 1 and 2 cm) on the tip of the nail. This wood had probably been forced out of the knot where the curled nail hooked into it. When it came time for the dead victim to be removed from the cross, the executioners could not pull out this nail, bent as it was within the cross. The only way to remove the body was to take an ax or hatchet and amputate the feet.[12]




A shaft tomb. Poorer people in the first century C.E., whose families could not afford rock-cut tombs, buried their dead in trench graves. A 5-to-7-foot-deep trench was dug with a niche at the bottom for the body. Other trench graves have been located at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and at Khirbet Qazone, southeast of the Dead Sea. Jesus likely would have been buried in such a tomb had Joseph of Arimathea not offered a place in his family's rock-cut tomb.

In other words, the means by which victims were affixed to crosses usually leave no discernable traces in the physical remains or archaeological record. Some victims were bound with ropes, which were untied when the body was removed from the cross. When victims were nailed to a cross, the nails had to be pulled out so that the body could be taken down. This is exactly how the apocryphal Gospel of Peter (6:21) describes Jesus' crucifixion: "And then they drew the nails from the hands of the Lord and



*Abraham Graice*

A shaft tomb. Poorer people in the first century C.E., whose families could not afford rock-cut tombs, buried their dead in trench graves. A 5-to-7-foot-deep trench was dug with a niche at the bottom for the body. The example in the photo, from Beit Safafa, southwest of Jerusalem, shows two skeletons buried head to toe in the niche at the bottom of the shaft. Other trench graves have been located at Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and at Khirbet Qazone, southeast of the Dead Sea. Jesus likely would have been buried in such a tomb had Joseph of Arimathea not offered a place in his family's rock-cut tomb.

placed him on the earth." The nail in Yehohanan's ankle, on the other hand, was preserved only because it bent after hitting a knot in the wood and therefore could not be removed from the body.

Jesus came from a family of modest means that presumably could not afford a rock-cut tomb. Had Joseph of Arimathea not offered Jesus a spot in his family tomb, Jesus likely would have been disposed of in the manner of the poorer classes: in an individual trench grave dug into the ground. This method of burial is similar to the way many dead are buried today. In ancient trench graves, the body of the deceased was wrapped in a shroud and sometimes placed in a wooden coffin. The body was then laid in a hollowed-out space at the base of the trench. After the trench was filled in, a rough headstone was often erected at one end. The headstones are uninscribed, although some may once have had painted decoration or inscriptions that have not survived. Because trench graves are poor in finds and are much less conspicuous and more susceptible to destruction than rock-cut tombs, relatively few examples are recorded.[13]

In and around Judea examples of trench graves have been found at Qumran, where members of a Jewish sect were buried,[14] at a cemetery near Jerusalem[b] and in a cemetery near the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.[c 15]

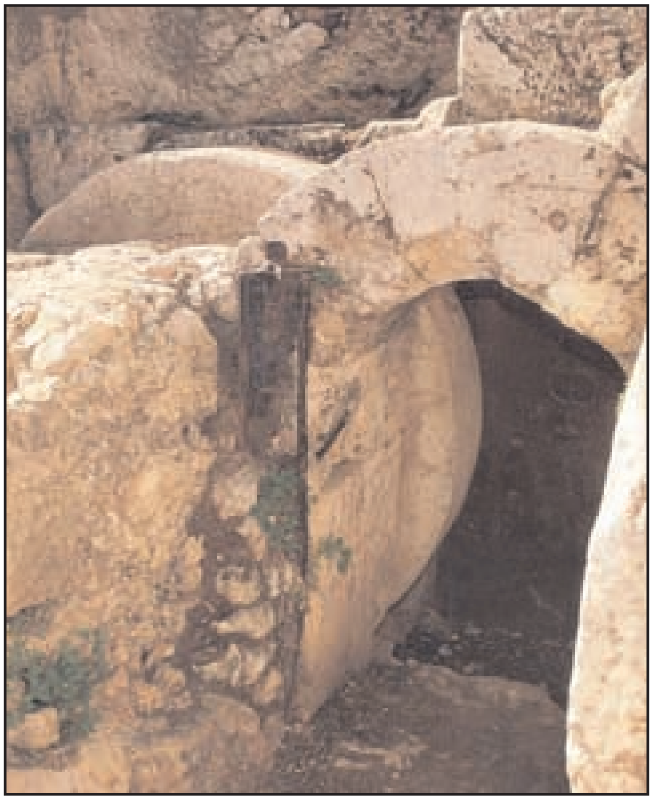
When the Gospels tell us that Joseph of Arimathea offered Jesus a spot in his tomb, it is because Jesus' family did not own a rock-cut tomb and there was no time to prepare a grave—that is, there was no time to *dig* a grave, *not* hew a rock-cut tomb—before the Sabbath. It is not surprising that Joseph, who is described as a wealthy Jew, perhaps even a member of the Sanhedrin, had a rock-cut family tomb. The Gospel accounts apparently describe Joseph placing Jesus' body in one of the *loculi* in his family's tomb. The "new" tomb mentioned by Matthew probably refers to a previously unused *loculus*. The Gospels include an accurate description of Jesus' body being wrapped in a linen shroud. When Joseph departed, he sealed the entrance to the tomb by blocking the doorway with a rolling stone.[d 16]

Joseph's tomb must have belonged to his family because by definition rock-cut tombs in Jerusalem were family tombs. There is no evidence that the Sanhedrin or the Roman authorities paid for and maintained rock-cut tombs for executed criminals from impoverished families. Instead, these unfortunates would have been buried in individual trench graves or pits. This sort of tradition is preserved in the reference to "the Potter's Field, to bury strangers in" (Matthew 27:7–8).[e]

Unlike Crossan, who "cannot find any detailed historical information about the crucifixion of Jesus,"[17] I believe that the Gospel accounts of Jesus' burial are largely consistent with the archaeological evidence. Although archaeology does not prove there was a follower of Jesus named Joseph of Arimathea or that Pontius Pilate granted his request for Jesus' body, the Gospel accounts describing Jesus' removal from the cross and burial are consistent with archaeological evidence and with Jewish law.

# Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?

## By Amos Kloner



Hershel Shanks

Is this the scene that confronted the two Marys when they arrived at Jesus' tomb? According to the Gospel of Mark 16:4, "When they looked up [at the tomb], they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back."

The 4.5-foot-tall blocking stone shown here separates the living from the dead at the so-called Tomb of Herod's Family in Jerusalem. Used to seal the tomb entrance, the disk-shaped stone could be rolled into a niche beside the entryway (as shown here) to allow for new interments in the six-chambered tomb. The massive stone gives proof of the distinguished pedigree of the wealthy family to whom the tomb belonged. Square blocking stones, however, were customary in Jesus' day; round blocking stones were extremely rare, appearing only in the very prosperous and distinguished family tombs.

Most modern reconstructions of Jesus' tomb—based heavily on English translations of the gospel text—depict a round blocking stone. But author Amos Kloner notes that the Greek word *kulio*, translated as "rolled" in the Gospels, may also mean "dislodged" or "moved." This textual ambiguity, combined with the archaeological evidence, suggests that the blocking stone used to seal Jesus' tomb was most likely square, not round.

We should have a very good idea what Jesus' tomb looked like, with the references in the Gospels and our knowledge of contemporaneous tombs found in and around Jerusalem. Yet until now, most of the reconstructions of this most famous of tombs have, I believe, been wrong.

The most surprising of my findings is that the blocking stone in front of the tomb was square, not round. So it could not, as many New Testament translations have it, be "rolled away"; it could only be pulled back or away.

As we shall see, the archaeological evidence for my new reconstruction is clear enough. The gospel texts, however, will need some explaining.

Let's begin at the entrance to the tomb. It is true that the massive blocking stones (in Hebrew, *golalim*; singular, *golel* or *golal*) used to protect the entrances to tombs in Jesus' day came in two shapes: round and square. But more than 98 percent of the Jewish tombs from this period, called the Second Temple period (c. first century B.C.E. to 70 C.E.), were closed with square blocking stones. Of the more than 900 burial caves from the Second Temple period found in and around Jerusalem, only four are known to have used round (disk-shaped) blocking stones.

Jerusalem tombs in this period were typically family tombs carved into the limestone caves found throughout the region. The entrances to the most common type of burial caves were generally rectangular (nearly square in shape) and low. Inside, steps led down into a rectangular standing pit that was lined on all but the entrance side by benches.



Courtesy Amos Kloner

A square blocking stone has been removed from the small rectangular entrance to this Jerusalem tomb, north of the Old City on Mt. Scopus.

This standing pit, created by digging out the floor, allowed ancient workmen to stand erect in the low-ceilinged cave. Two kinds of recesses were carved into the cave walls for individual corpses: deep cavities, about 6 feet deep and 1.5 feet wide and high, called loculi (*kochim* in Hebrew); and shallow shelflike niches, about 6 feet long. These shallower niches are called arcosolia if the top of the niche is arched and quadrosolia if the niche is rectangular, with a straight top. About a year after the primary burial in one of these recesses, after the body had decomposed, the bones were reburied in a bone storage chamber or, during the first century C.E., in a stone ossuary, or bone box.

As more space was needed in the tomb, additional burial niches were carved into the limestone walls. In more elaborate tombs, room after room might be added to the cave, extending it in various directions.[a]

The blocking stones that covered the entrance were believed to prevent ritual impurities within the tomb from escaping. They also kept scavenging animals from entering.

Square or rectangular blocking stones sealed the entrance of a cave tomb much like a cork in a bottle: One end of the blocking stone fit snugly into the entrance while the other end, like the top of a cork, was somewhat larger on the outside. Sometimes the blocking stone was supported by other stones, called in the Mishnah[b] *dofek* (the stone closer to the *golel*) and *dofek dofkin* (the outer stone).[1]

The handful of round blocking stones from Jerusalem in this period are large, at least 4 feet in diameter. They occur only in the more elaborate cave tombs, which had at least two rooms or, as in one case, a spacious hall. The most famous example comes from the so-called Tomb of Herod's Family (see photo, p. 9), which can still be seen behind the King David Hotel in Jerusalem.[2] Another very well known example is from the so-called Tombs of the Kings, which is actually the tomb of Queen Helena of Adiabene, located north of the Old City of Jerusalem, near the American Colony Hotel.[3] Both of these tombs are elegant and rich. The third example comes from a funerary monument adjacent to the Tomb of Herod's Family.[4] The fourth is from an elaborate tomb in the Kidron Valley.[5] In addition, a small round sealing stone was probably used to close off the inner rooms in a tomb in the Hinnom Valley, but it was not used in the entryway.[6] These round stones, which were set on one end between two parallel walls and thus moved on a sort of track, not only provided a good seal but could easily be rolled away to open the tomb for new interments or secondary burials.



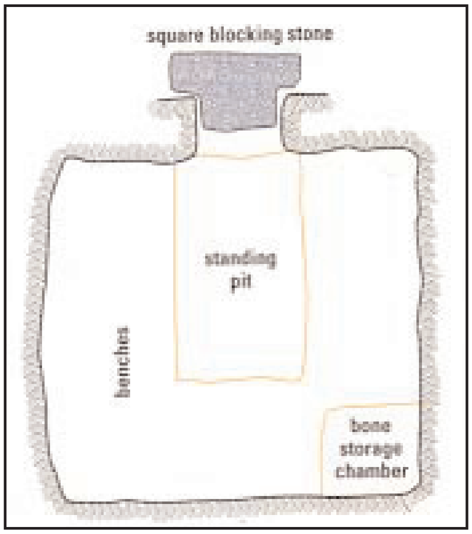
Courtesy Amos Kloner

This photo, taken from inside the Mt. Scopus tomb, demonstrates the tight seal provided by the square blocking stone.

So far we have been talking about blocking stones from the Second Temple period, which ended with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. In later periods the situation changed, and round blocking stones became much more common. Dozens of them have been found from the late Roman to Byzantine periods (second to seventh century C.E.). These later round stones were much smaller than the Second Temple period stones (less than 3

feet in diameter), and they did not move on a track but simply leaned against the rock facade, making them even simpler to move.[7]

But in Jesus' time, round blocking stones were extremely rare and appeared only in the tombs of the wealthiest Jews. Nevertheless, the Gospels seem to indicate that Jesus' tomb was sealed with a rolling stone. As quoted in the box on page 24, all four canonical Gospels refer to Jesus' tomb. Matthew, Mark and Luke all describe the stone being "rolled" (in John it is "taken away"), and thus it is only natural to assume that the stone was round. But we must remember that "rolled" is a translation of the Greek word *kulio*, which can also mean "dislodge," "move back" or simply "move." This ambiguity in the text, combined with the archaeological evidence, leads me to agree with the scholar Gustave Dalman, who, as early as 1935, suggested that Matthew 27 does not refer to a round blocking stone.




Like a cork in a bottle, a square blocking stone seals the entrance to a tomb at Giloh, in south Jerusalem. The wider end of the stone remained outside the tomb, while the narrower face fit snugly into the tomb's entryway.

In Matthew 28 an angel sits on the stone after "rolling" it back. If the stone had been rolled back between two walls, as was the case with Second Temple period round stones, it would have been impossible to sit on it. Indeed, it would be difficult to sit on the edge of a disk-shaped stone even if it had been pulled back from the tomb entrance. A square blocking stone would make a much better perch. Of course, with angels anything can happen, but it seems likely that the human author of the Gospel would have described the angel sitting on a square stone.

It may be worthwhile returning for a moment to the Hebrew word for these blocking stones, both round and square: *golal* or *golel* (plural, *golalim*). The root means "to roll" as well as "to move."

Now let us try to picture the interior of the tomb in which Jesus was buried. That the tomb was small is suggested by the fact that the corpse could easily be seen from the entrance: Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary could apparently see the body from outside (Mark 15:47; see also John 20:1).

According to most earlier reconstructions, Jesus' tomb had an entrance corridor. On either side were burial niches (either arcosolia or quadrosolia), in one of which Jesus was supposedly laid. But here again archaeological evidence suggests otherwise. In the Second Temple period, the only tombs with burial niches in the entry corridors were large burial complexes such as the Tombs of the Kings[8] and a tomb in the Hinnom Valley called Firdus e-Rum, known traditionally as the tomb of St. Onofrius.[9] But not one of the hundreds of one-room Second Temple tombs has an entry passage with quadrosolia or arcosolia.

The gospel text also indicates that Jesus was not laid on a quadrosolium or arcosolium. In John 20:12 Mary sees two angels "sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and the other at the feet." This would have been impossible (or unlikely) if the body had been laid in a burial niche, because arcosolia and quadrosolia were at most 2 feet high.[10]

Most likely Jesus' tomb was a standard small burial room, with a standing pit and burial benches along



*Courtesy Gideon Avni*

Other options for storing bodies were shallow, shelf-like niches with arched tops called arcosolia, or rectangular, straight-ceilinged niches called quadrosolia (not shown). Arcosolia generally appear in Jerusalem's richest tombs: The decorated walls of this burial chamber, carved and painted to replicate marble paneling and (in the corners of the chamber) Doric columns, attest to the prosperity of its owners.



Courtesy Gideon Avni

R.I.P. Cut into the walls of cave tombs, deep niches known as loculi were widely used for burials in the Second Temple period. Typically 6 feet deep, and 1.5 to 2 feet wide and high, loculi (in Hebrew, *kokhim*) also served as repositories for ossuaries, small stone boxes into which the deceased's bones were placed after the corpse decomposed (about one year after burial).

Both the arcosolium and loculi shown here were discovered in the Akeldama graveyard, just south of the City of David, where Jerusalem's elite built lavish family tombs, some of them with entrances facing north across the Hinnom Valley.

three sides. It may or may not have had loculi. Scholars who have studied burial caves from Second Temple times have concluded that primary burials were often performed in small, hastily dug burial caves—and only later were loculi, arcosolia and bone storage chambers, or additional rooms added.

Jesus' burial took place on the eve of the Sabbath. His would have been a hurried funeral, in observance of the Jewish law that forbade leaving the corpse unburied overnight—especially on the Sabbath and religious holidays. The body was simply and hastily covered with a shroud and placed on a burial bench in a small burial cave. This is the context in which we should understand John 20:11, in which we are told that Mary "bent over to look into the tomb," and saw two angels sitting at the head and foot of where Jesus' body had lain.

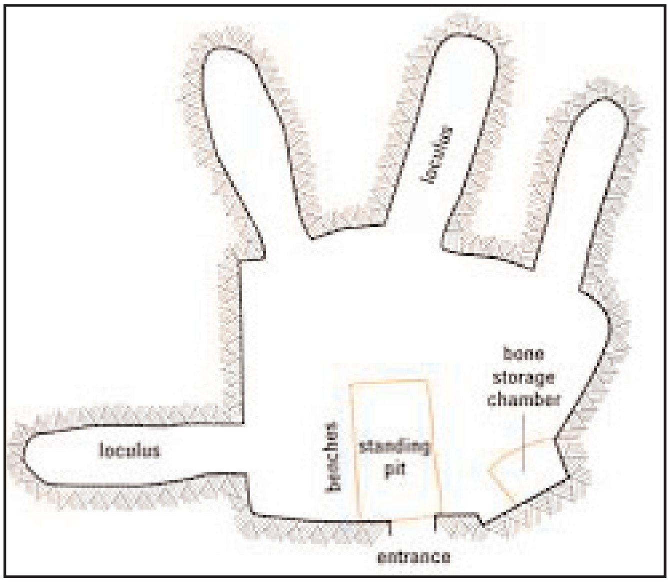
I would go one step further and suggest that Jesus' tomb was what the sages refer to as a "borrowed (or temporary) tomb." During the Second Temple period and later, Jews often practiced temporary burial. This is reflected, for example, in two quotations from rabbinic sources involving burial customs and mourning:

> Whosoever finds a corpse in a tomb should not move it from its place, unless he knows that this is a temporary grave.[11]

> Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar says: "Rabban Gamliel had a temporary tomb in Yabneh into which they bring the corpse and lock the door upon it ..."[12]

A borrowed or temporary cave was used for a limited time, and the occupation of the cave by the corpse conferred no rights of ownership upon the family.

Jesus' interment was probably of this nature. He was buried hurriedly on Friday, on the eve of the Sabbath. On the third day, the day after the Sabbath, Mary Magdalene and another Mary visited the tomb, as was the Jewish custom.[13] (The counting of the days, incidentally, also follows Jewish custom, which included both the first and the last day in the count. To this day, circumcision of Jewish boys occurs on the eighth day, counting the day of birth as day one; a son born on a Monday, for example, is circumcised on the following Monday.)




A typical cave tomb from Second Temple period Jerusalem is shown in this floor plan. A cramped entranceway leads into the single, square chamber. Here, the floor has been lowered to create a standing pit, allowing mourners and workers to stand erect in the low-ceilinged cave.

Surrounding the pit, the part of the floor left intact served as burial benches for bodies. Bodies (and ossuaries) were also stored in the four finger-like loculi carved into the soft limestone walls of the tomb.

Based on an inscription on an ossuary found inside, this tomb has been identified as belonging to the family of Caiaphas, the high priest who presided at the trial of Jesus. Jesus' own tomb was no doubt much simpler, more like that shown in the plan for the tomb at Giloh, above.

According to Jewish tradition, the purpose of the visit to the tomb after three days was to determine the condition of the corpse:

> One should go to the cemetery to check the dead within three days, and not fear that such smacks of pagan practices. There was actually one buried man who was visited after three days and lived for twenty-five more years and had sons, and died afterward.[14]

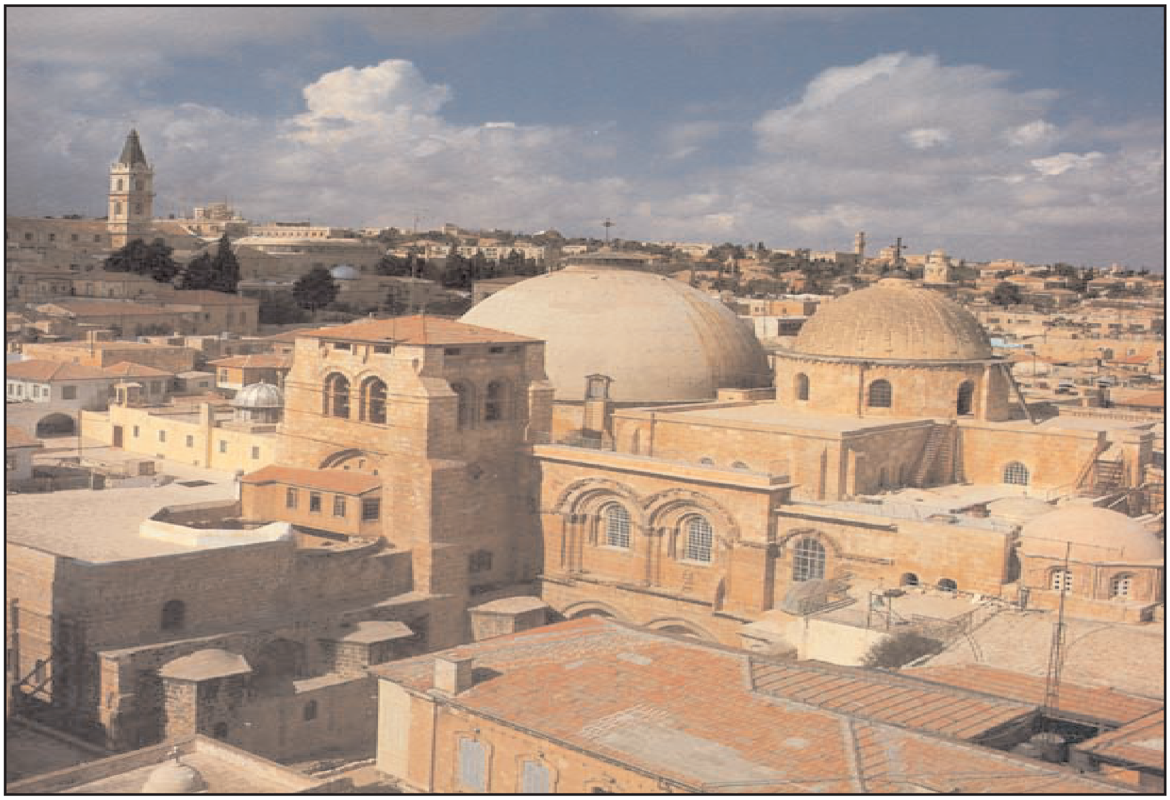
Jesus' disciples may have visited the tomb on the third day to conform to this Jewish custom. But by that time, he had risen.

Scholars generally agree that the site of the Holy Sepulchre Church marks the location of Jesus' burial.[c] But the aedicule (shrine) inside the church, which marks the traditional burial site, bears no signs of a first-century burial. The burial shelf in the aedicule is covered with a later slab, which does not appear to be part of the local bedrock and was probably imported into the cave.[15] Until recently, only the bench on the right side of the aedicule was thought to have been original. (The aedicule itself dates to the beginning of the 19th century.) Recent studies at the site, however, have not shed light on the relationship between the rock, the foundations and the aedicule as they exist today and the original burial cave.[16] The only indication that the spot where the aedicule now stands might once have been a tomb is the presence of a burial cave with loculi a few yards away.[17]

Jesus' tomb may no longer exist. But through a combination of archaeological research and textual study, we may still reconstruct its original appearance, starting with the square stone that blocked its entrance.

# Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?

## By Dan Bahat

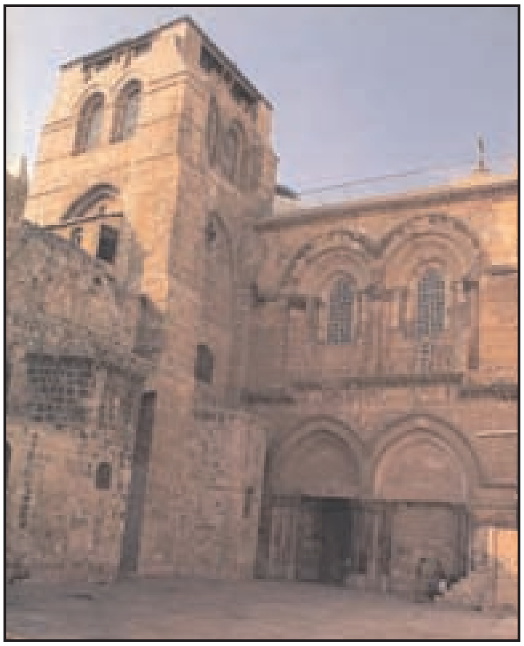


*Garo Nalbandian*

Crowded by red-roofed stone buildings on all sides, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre can be identified by its prominent domes. The larger dome covers the aedicule, Jesus' tomb; the small brown dome stands over the intersection of the transept and the nave. Now located in the heart of the Christian Quarter of the Old City, the church seems an unlikely location for Jesus' tomb. This was true in the fourth century as well, when the site, even then within the city walls, was identified to Queen Helena as the place of Jesus' burial. The unlikely location of the site pointed out to Helena supports its authenticity, as does the fact that the site was outside the city walls during the first third of the first century, the time of Jesus' burial.

Since 1960, the Armenian, the Greek and the Latin religious communities that are responsible for the care of the Holy Sepulchre Church in Jerusalem have been engaged in a joint restoration project of one of the most fascinating and complex buildings in the world.

In connection with the restoration, they have undertaken extensive archaeological work in an effort to establish the history of the building and of the site on which it rests. Thirteen trenches were excavated primarily to check the stability of Crusader structures, but these trenches also constituted archaeological excavations. Stripping plaster from the walls revealed structures from earlier periods. A new, modern drainage system was put in place, but the work itself was also used for archaeological research. Elsewhere, soundings were made for purely archaeological purposes.



*Hershel Shanks*

Through the facade of the Crusader church, modern pilgrims enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The Crusader church was built in the 12th century on the site of the fourth-century Holy Garden, in which stood the rock of Golgotha. The Crusader church enclosed the rock within a building for the first time. As you enter the church, the rotunda surrounding Jesus' tomb is on the left. Originally built around the tomb in the fourth century, the rotunda was included within the Crusader church and indeed is its focal point. Turning to the right within the Crusader church, you find a set of steps at its eastern end leading down to St. Helena's chapel where, according to tradition, she found the true cross.

The square tower at the left of the facade is a Crusader bell tower. At the corner where the facade meets the square tower, the beginning of another decorative carved stone arch, identical to those above the two facade windows, springs to the left toward a window that no longer exists.

The results of all this excavation and research have now been published in a three-volume final report by Virgilio C. Corbo, professor of archaeology at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem.[a] Father Corbo has been intimately involved in this archaeological work for more than 20 years, and no one is better able to report on the results than he.[b]

Although the text itself (Volume I) is in Italian, there is a 16-page English summary by Stanislao Loffreda. Father Loffreda has also translated into English the captions to the archaeological drawings and reconstructions (Volume II) and the archaeological photographs (Volume III). So this handsome set will be accessible to the English-speaking world as well as to those who read Italian.

During the late Judean monarchy, beginning in about the seventh or eighth century B.C., the area where the Holy Sepulchre Church is now located was a large limestone quarry. The city itself lay to the southeast and expanded first westward and then northward only at a later date. The high quality, so-called meleke-type limestone has been found wherever the excavations in the church reached bedrock. Traces of the quarry have been found not only in the church area, but also in excavations conducted nearby in the 1960s and 1970s—by Kathleen Kenyon, in the Muristan enclave of the Christian Quarter, and by Ute Lux, in the nearby Church of the Redeemer. This meleke stone was chiseled out in squarish blocks for building purposes. The artificially shaped and cut rock surface that remains reveals to the archaeologist that the area was originally a quarry. Sometimes the workers left partially cut ashlars still attached to the bedrock (Corbo photo 62). In one area (east of St. Helena's Chapel in the Holy Sepulchre Church), the quarry was over 40 feet deep. The earth and ash that filled the quarry contained Iron Age II pottery, from about the seventh century B.C.; so the quarry can be securely dated.[1]

According to Father Corbo, this quarry continued to be used until the first century B.C. At that time, the quarry was filled, and a layer of reddish-brown soil mixed with stone flakes from the ancient quarry was spread over it. The quarry became a garden or orchard, where cereals, fig trees, carob trees and olive trees grew. As evidence of the garden, Father Corbo relies on the fact that above the quarry he found the layer of arable soil.[2] At this same time, the quarry-garden also became a cemetery. At least four tombs dating from this period have been found.



Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. II*

The drawing depicts in detail the decorative stone work on these arches. It is clear that the Crusaders added the bell tower after completing the facade of the church.

The first is the tomb traditionally known as the tomb of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (No. 28 in Corbo's list). The Gospel accounts (John 19:38–41; Luke 23:50–53; Matthew 27:51–61) report that Joseph took Jesus' body down from the cross; Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes and, together, he and Joseph wrapped Jesus' body in linen and buried him in a garden in Joseph's newly cut, rock-hewn tomb.

The tomb traditionally attributed to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea is a typical *kokh* (plural, *kokhim*) of the first century. *Kokhim* are long, narrow recesses in a burial cave where either a coffin or the

body of the deceased could be laid. Sometimes ossuaries (boxes of bones collected about a year after the original burial) were placed in *kokhim*.

In the course of restoration work in the Holy Sepulchre Church a hitherto unknown passage to this tomb was found beneath the rotunda.

Another type of tomb, known as an *arcosolium* (plural, *arcosolia*), was also common in this period. An *arcosolium* is a shallow, rock-hewn coffin cut lengthwise in the side of a burial cave. It has an arch-shaped top over the recess, from which its name is derived. The so-called tomb of Jesus (Nos. 1 and 2 in Corbo's plates) is composed of an antechamber and a rock-cut *arcosolium*. Unfortunately, centuries of pilgrims have completely deformed this tomb by pecking and chipping away bits of rock as souvenirs or for their reliquaries. Today the tomb is completely covered with later masonry, but enough is known to date it as an *arcosolium* from about the turn of the era.

A third, much larger tomb, probably of the *kokh* type was found in front of the church (in the Parvis). This tomb was greatly enlarged in Constantine's time and was used as a cistern. Very little remains of it, but Corbo's study reveals its original function as a tomb.

Finally, although not mentioned by Corbo, in the late 19th century another tomb of the *kokh* type was found in the church area under the Coptic convent.[3]

Obviously many other tombs that existed in the area were destroyed by later structures. But the evidence seems clear that at the turn of the era, this area was a large burial ground.

The tomb in front of the Church was actually cut into the rock of what is traditionally regarded as the hill of Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified. It is possible that the rocky outcrop of Golgotha was a *nefesh*, or memorial monument.[c] However, this hypothesis needs more study before it can be advanced with any confidence.

The next period for which we have archaeological evidence in the Holy Sepulchre Church is from the period of the Roman emperor Hadrian. In 70 A.D. the Romans crushed the First Jewish Revolt; at that time they destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. Less than 70 years later, in 132 A.D., the Jews again revolted, this time under the leadership of Rabbi Akivah and Bar Kokhba. It took the Romans three years to suppress the Second Jewish Revolt. This time, however, the victorious Roman emperor Hadrian banned Jews from Jerusalem and trenched around it a *pomerium*, a



Yoram Weinberg

Signs of an ancient quarry were found everywhere beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and in its vicinity. Here we see the impressions of stone blocks that were removed by the quarriers. This particular quarry is under the Chapel of St. Vartan east of St. Helena's Chapel. Pottery sherds found in the fill date the quarry to the seventh century B.C. and perhaps as much as a century earlier. The stone is a fine-quality type of limestone known as *meleke*.



Garo Nalbandian

Beneath the north wall of the rotunda lies a tomb traditionally attributed to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. According to Gospel accounts (John 19:38–41; Luke 23:50–53; Matthew 27:57–61), Joseph took Jesus' body down from the cross and, with Nicodemus' assistance, buried him in his own newly cut tomb. Typical of first-century tombs, it has two long recesses, or *kokhim*, in which a body could be placed.



Art Resource, New York, NY

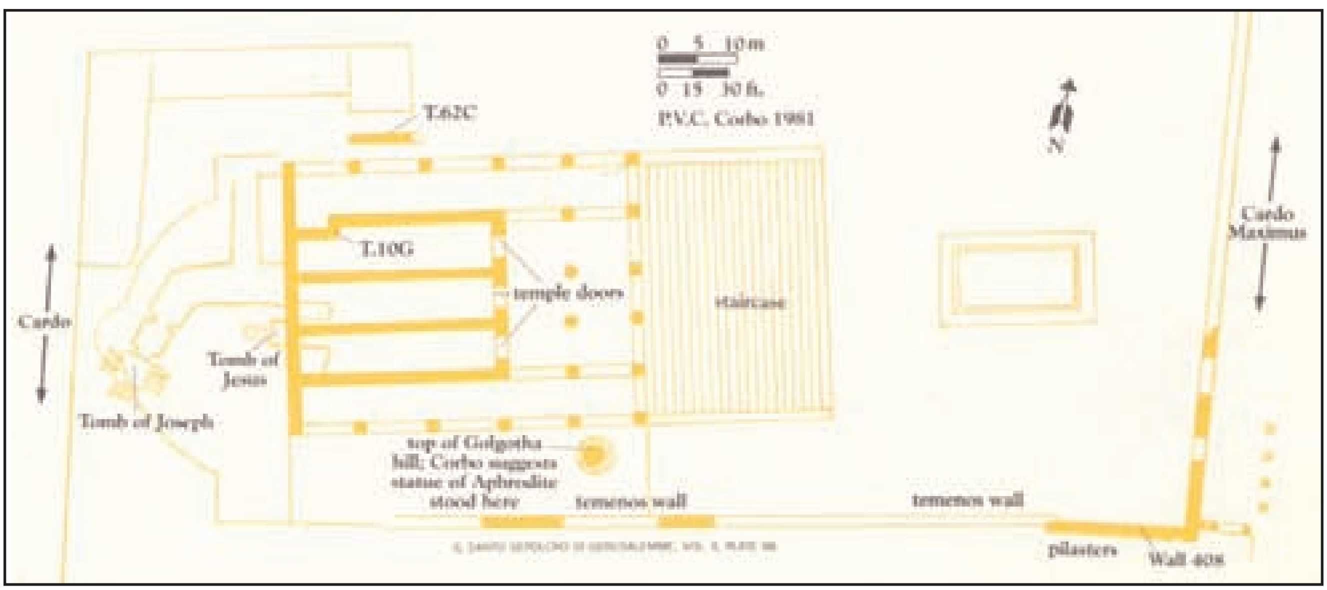
An arcosolium tomb, another typical kind of first-century tomb. A bench cut into the rock wall held the body. Over the bench, the rock was cut into an arch; hence the name *arcosolium*. This particular fourth-century example comes from the catacombs of the Via Latina in Rome; on its *arcosolium* is a depiction of the raising of Lazarus. But remains of an *arcosolium* tomb have also been found beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Early tradition identifies this tomb as that of Jesus. It is barely recognizable as a tomb, however, because over the centuries pilgrims chipped away at the rock and most of what remains has been covered by masonry.

furrow plowed by the founder of a new city to mark its confines. To remove every trace of its Jewish past, Hadrian rebuilt Jerusalem as a Roman city named Aelia Capitolina. (For the same reason, he also changed the name of the country from Judea to Palaestina or Palestine.)

On the site of the former seventh-century B.C. quarry and first-century B.C. orchard-garden and cemetery, where the Holy Sepulchre Church was to be built, Hadrian constructed a gigantic raised platform—that is, a nearly rectangular retaining wall filled with earth. On top of the platform, he built a smaller raised podium, and on top of the podium, he built a temple. Although the remains of the Hadrianic wall enclosing the platform are scant, its existence is clear.

Because the area had been dug as a quarry and because it had also been honeycombed with tombs and was left with depressions and protrusions of uncut rock, the building of this platform was necessary to create a level construction site.

Many of the ashlars[d] used by Hadrian for the retaining wall of the platform were actually old Herodian ashlars—left after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and Herod's temple in 70 A.D. They are identical in size and facing to the Herodian ashlars in the retaining wall of the Temple Mount. Hadrian's wall




Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. II, Plate 68*

Plan of Hadrian's pagan temple. Built by the Roman emperor in the second century A.D., this temple stood where, two centuries later, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would be built by Constantine. The reconstruction is by Father Corbo, who proposes that Hadrian's temple included a tripartite rectangular structure with three niches in which stood statues of Venus, Minerva and Jupiter. **BAR**'s reviewer Dan Bahat suggests that Hadrian's temple may well have been a rotunda, similar to the Roman temple of Hercules Victor (see illustration), rather than a rectangular structure, and that the Hadrianic rotunda was probably dedicated to Venus/Aphrodite, rather than Jupiter, Venus and Minerva, as argued by Father Corbo.

Of special interest is Wall 408, lower right. This is an extant portion of the Hadrianic enclosure wall. The small white indentations on the south (outer) side of that wall indicate that the wall had pilasters, or engaged columns, protruding from the wall as they did on the outer wall of Herod's Temple Mount.

therefore looked like a Herodian wall—much like the famous Western Wall of the Temple Mount which is, even today, a focus of Jewish reverence.

Although not mentioned by Corbo, the upper part of Hadrian's retaining wall even had slightly protruding pilasters or engaged pillars along the outer face of the upper part of the wall, thereby creating the appearance of regularly spaced recesses. The Hadrianic enclosure thus duplicated the Herodian Temple Mount enclosure, although unfortunately the latter did not survive to a height that included these pilasters, except in traces. This style can be seen, however, in the Herodian wall enclosing the traditional tomb of the patriarchs (the cave of Machpelah) at Hebron.[e]

The fact that Hadrian appears to have deliberately attempted to duplicate the Herodian enclosure at the Temple Mount has special significance. Instead of a temple to Yahweh, however, Hadrian built on his raised enclosure an elaborate temple to the goddess of love, Venus/Aphrodite.

Corbo refers to Hadrian's temple as Capitolium, that is, dedicated to Jupiter the Capitoline. For this, he relies on the fifth-century testimony of Jerome who mentions a Jerusalem temple dedicated to Jupiter. However, Eusebius in the fourth century tells us Hadrian's temple at this site was dedicated to Venus/Aphrodite. There is no reason for Corbo to choose Jupiter over Venus/Aphrodite, especially because Dio Cassio in the third century fixes the site of the temple of Jupiter on the site of the former Jewish Temple, that is, on the Temple Mount. That is the temple Jerome is referring to. A number of other ancient writers from the fifth century on refer to a temple of Venus/Aphrodite on the site where later the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was built.

To support his attribution to Jupiter, Corbo claims to have found in the rotunda of the church two fragments from a triple cella that would have accommodated statues of the Capitoline triad, Venus, Minerva and Jupiter. There is no basis, however, for suggesting that these fragmentary remains are part of a triple cella—or even that they are part of the pagan temple itself. As so often in this report, Corbo's assertion as to the date of walls is merely that—pure assertion. No evidence is given.

Parts of Hadrian's enclosure wall have survived. According to Corbo, fragments of other walls, found in cisterns and in what was the first-century B.C. garden, belonged to the substructure of Hadrian's temple. But for this, as before, we must rely solely on Corbo's assertion. He presents no evidence on which his conclusions can be tested. In any event, nothing of the visible parts of Hadrian's temple has been discovered. As we know from historical sources, it was razed to the ground by Constantine, so



*Garo Nalbandian*

Typical Herodian ashlars or squared blocks of stone. The stones seen here form part of the enclosure wall of the Temple Mount platform. In the second century, the Roman emperor Hadrian used ashlars like these to build a wall enclosing a platform on the site where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre would later stand.



Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. III, Photo 120*

Large stones from Hadrian's enclosure (above the right edge of the staircase) were found in excavations east of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. On several blocks the narrow margins and flat central bosses are easily seen. These ashlars come from the part of the enclosure where a piloster began (see Wall 408 on plan). The pilaster is seen on top of an inwardly angled stone above steps 10–12, counting from the bottom of the staircase. This small section of Hadrian's enclosure wall, which provided a platform for a temple to a pagan goddess, demonstrates that Hadrian probably imitated the Herodian enclosure about the nearby Jewish Temple Mount.



*Garo Nalbandian*

Built by Herod the Great, this monumental enclosure in Hebron encases the traditional burial site of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their wives Sarah, Rebekah and Leah. The only Herodian structure intact today, its design is identical to the enclosure Herod built about the platform of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Unfortunately the Jerusalem enclosure wall can no longer be seen in its original splendor. Both enclosures were built of beautifully dressed blocks of stone with narrow margins and flat central bosses. About half-way up the wall, pilasters protrude slightly from the face of the wall.

In the second century, when the Roman emperor Hadrian built an enclosure on the Jerusalem site that would someday be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he built it with exactly the same design, including the pilasters that began part way up the wall. He even reused stones from Herod's Temple Mount, which the Romans had partially destroyed in 70 A.D. On the platform created by this enclosure, in imitation of the Jewish Temple Mount, Hadrian built a temple dedicated to the goddess Venus/Aphrodite.

there is no hope of recovering it. Likewise, the small podium on which the temple sat, on top of the enclosure-platform; the podium too has vanished without a trace.

Corbo's reconstruction of the Hadrianic temple is thus completely speculative—and unsatisfactory. In the first place, he assumes it was a three-niche structure pursuant to his mistaken theory that it was dedicated to Jupiter the Capitoline rather than Venus/Aphrodite.[f] But, in any event, there is no known parallel to Corbo's plan.[g]

Queen Helena, Constantine's mother, was shown the site on her visit to Jerusalem in 326 A.D. We do not know in what condition the site was at this time. Perhaps the pagan temple constructed by Hadrian was already in ruins—destroyed by zealous Christians.

After Queen Helena's visit, the Christian community proceeded to remove whatever was left of the Hadrianic temple, as well as the Hadrianic enclosure and the fill it contained. For the Christian community, this fill, intended by Hadrian to create a level surface for building, represented Hadrian's attempt to obliterate forever not only Jesus' tomb, but the adjacent rock of Golgotha where he had been crucified.

According to literary sources[h] Constantine built a rotunda around Jesus' tomb. In front of the rotunda was the site of the crucifixion (Golgotha or Calvary), in what is referred to in ancient literary sources as the Holy Garden. On the other side of the garden, Constantine built a long church in the shape of a basilica, consisting of a nave and side aisles separated from the nave by rows of columns. Here the faithful could offer prayers. Between the rotunda and the basilica lay the hill of Golgotha.

Was the Constantinian rotunda actually built over the true site of Jesus' burial?

Although we can never be certain, it seems very likely that it was.

As we have seen, the site was a turn-of-the-era cemetery. The cemetery, including Jesus' tomb, had itself been buried for nearly 300 years. The fact that it had indeed been a cemetery, and that this memory of Jesus' tomb survived despite Hadrian's burial of it with his enclosure fill, speaks to the authenticity of the site. Moreover, the fact that the Christian community in Jerusalem was never dispersed during this period, and that its succession of bishops was never interrupted supports the accuracy of the preserved memory that Jesus had been crucified and buried here.

Perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the authenticity of the site, however, is that it must have been regarded as such an unlikely site when pointed out to Constantine's mother Queen Helena in the fourth century. Then, as now, the site of what was to be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was in a crowded urban location that must have seemed as strange to a fourth-century pilgrim as it does to a modern one. But we now know that its location perfectly fits first-century conditions.

In the fourth century this site had long been enclosed within the city walls. The wall enclosing this part of the city (referred to by



Jerusalem on the Madaba map. This mosaic depiction of sixth-century Jerusalem's streets and buildings includes the Holy Sepulchre Church. According to Dan Bahat, the details shown are those from Constantine's church, still standing when this mosaic was laid on the floor of a church in today's Jordan. The Holy Sepulchre Church is the large upside-down gold-domed structure perpendicular to the Cardo, the colonnaded main thoroughfare running from right to left across the center of the city. The church is midway along the Cardo, interrupting the lower row of columns. Four steps abut the Cardo's central roadway.

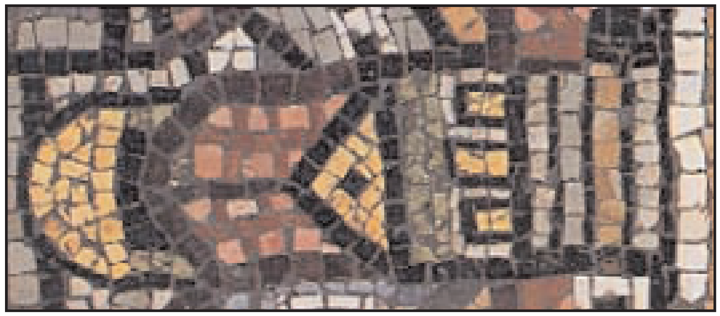
Josephus as the Third Wall) had been built by Herod Agrippa the local ruler who governed Judea between 41 and 44 A.D. (see map). Thus, this wall was built very soon after Jesus' crucifixion—not more than 10 or 15 years afterward. And that is the crucial point.

When Jesus was buried in about 30 A.D., this area was outside the city, in a garden, Corbo tells us, certainly in a cemetery of that time. These are the facts revealed by modern archaeology. Yet who could have known this in 325 A.D. if the memory of Jesus' burial had not been accurately preserved?

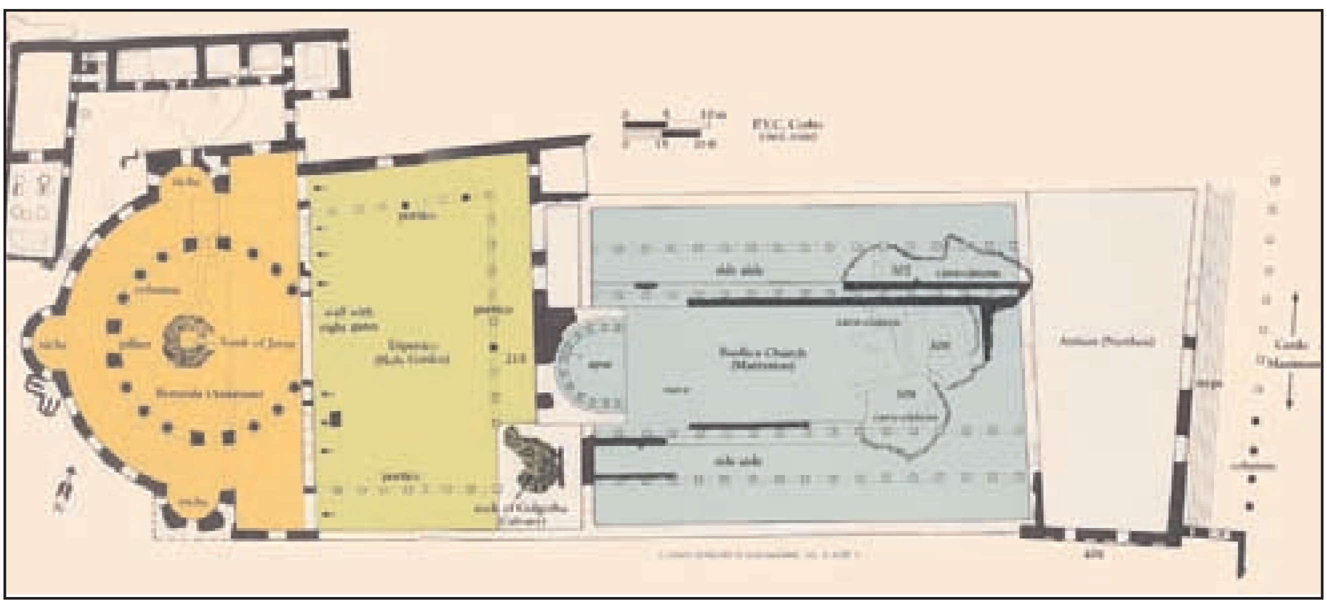
The Gospels tell us that Jesus was buried "near the city" (John 19:20); the site we are considering was then just outside the city, the city wall being only about 500 feet to the south and 350 feet to the east. We are also told the site was in a garden (John 19:41), which is at the very least consistent with the evidence we have of the first century condition of the site.

We may not be absolutely certain that the site of the Holy Sepulchre Church is the site of Jesus' burial, but we certainly have no other site that can lay a claim nearly as weighty, and we really have no reason to reject the authenticity of the site.

The basilica Constantine built in front of the tomb was typical of its time. It consisted of a center nave and aisles on either side of the nave separated from the nave by rows of columns. At the far end of

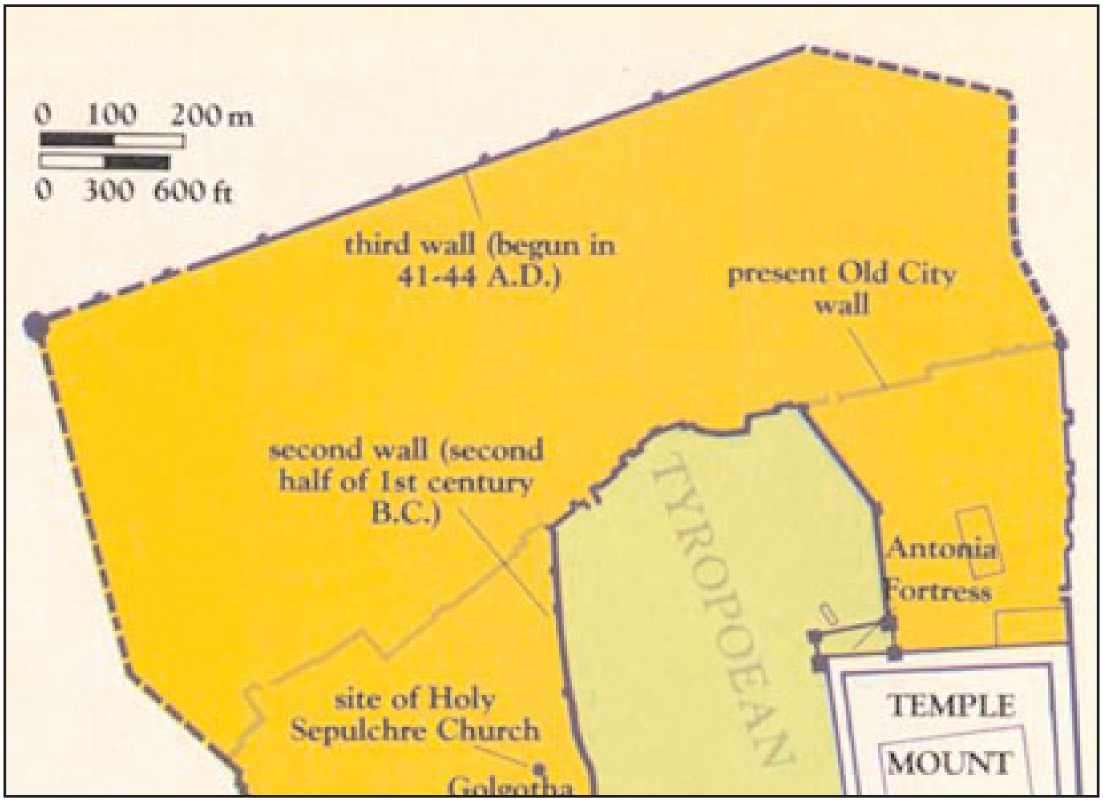


An enlarged detail of the Holy Sepulchre Church on the Madaba map, rotated 90º to the left so that its orientation is the same as the plan. Referring to the detail, we may observe the following features from right to left: the steps; doorways—probably those shown in the plan between the atrium and the steps; a triangular gold gable with a central rhomboid window pointing into the red basilica roof; five black tesserae between the roof and the gold dome; possibly representing the Holy Garden; the gold dome—probably the one covering the rotunda that surrounded the tomb of Jesus in the Constantinian church.




Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. II, plate 3*

Plan of the Constantinian complex from the fourth century. Black areas indicate extant remains. Dotted structures are those assumed but not found. The rotunda, with columns and pillars surrounding Jesus' tomb and three niches in the outer wall, is shaded yellow. This rotunda probably resembled the one in Rome (see photograph), part of a mausoleum for Constantine's daughter. The Holy Garden with a colonnaded portico on three sides is shaded green. An eight-gated wall separates the rotunda from the Holy Garden. (These gates are indicated by arrows.) In the southeast corner of the Holy Garden is the rock of Golgotha or Calvary (see arrow). On the other side of the Holy Garden is the basilica church (shaded blue) with a single apse toward the rotunda, and a nave with two aisles on either side. In front of the basilica is an atrium or narthex. A set of steps leads down to the city's major north-south thoroughfare, the Cardo. At the eastern end of the basilica church, Nos. 307, 308 and 309 indicate subterranean cavities that—in part— became chapels at the time of the Crusaders. Several features of Constantine's church are represented schematically in the Madaba map (see photograph).




*Adapted from* Carta Atlas of Jerusalem *(1982), p. 21*

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in relation to nearby city walls. The so called Third Wall was built by Herod Agrippa between 41 and 44 A.D., shortly after Jesus' crucifixion. At the time of the crucifixion, however, the site of Golgotha was outside the city wall—or "near the city," as Golgotha is described in John 19:20.



Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. III, Photo 88*

Archaeological remains from Constantine's church are identified by Corbo in this photograph. *A* is a section of the eastern stylobate, or column-bearing wall, of the triportico. The column base seen in the center is column 215 noted on the plan. *B* designates the western edge of the apse of the basilica church. *C* and *D* are later structures; *E* is identified by Corbo as a second-century Hadrianic wall, cut by the later stylobate.

the nave was a single apse. Unfortunately hardly a trace of Constantine's basilica church remains. From the sections of wall discovered, we can only confirm its location and former existence.

Behind (west of) Constantine's basilica was a large open garden on the other side of which, in the Rotunda, stood the tomb of Jesus. The apse of the basilica faced the tomb. Two principal scholars involved in the restoration disagree as to when the tomb was enclosed by a large, imposing rotunda. Corbo takes one view; Father Charles Coüasnon takes another. Coüasnon, who died in 1976, had been the architect of the Latin community in connection with the restoration work. In 1974 he published a preliminary report of the excavations, entitled *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, (London: Oxford University Press).[i]

According to Coüasnon the tomb was set in an isolated square niche annexed to the Holy Garden. Coüasnon believed the tomb remained exposed to the open air until after Constantine's death, at which time the rotunda was built around it, leaving the Holy Garden between the rotunda and the back of Constantine's basilica church.

This view is rejected by Corbo who is probably correct. According to Corbo, the rotunda was part of the original Constantinian construction and design. Unfortunately, from the nature of Corbo's excavation methodology and the limited archaeological evidence in this report, it is impossible to check his dating of walls.

There is one argument Corbo fails to make, however, that might well support his position; many temples to goddesses (like

Venus/Aphrodite) are round, in the form of rotundas. If it is true, as Eusebius says, that Hadrian had built a temple to Venus/Aphrodite here, it was quite probably a round temple. The Christian rotunda may well have been inspired by this pagan rotunda. (The phenomenon of a holy site from one religion being maintained as holy by subsequent religions was a common one throughout the ancient world.) If the architecture of Hadrian's pagan rotunda inspired the rotunda around Jesus' tomb, it is more likely that the later rotunda was built by Constantine himself, not by a later ruler who would not have known the pagan rotunda.

Two original columns of the rotunda built around Jesus' tomb have been preserved. Father Coüasnon suggested they were two halves of what was once a single, tall column. According to Coüasnon, this column had previously served in the portico of the Hadrianic temple; the two halves were later reused in the rotunda. In this, he is probably correct.

On the side of the niche that marked Jesus' tomb, a drain had been cut in the rock, apparently to allow the flow of rain water from the tomb. This might indicate that at least for some time the tomb stood in the open air. How long we cannot know.

In any event, a rotunda was soon built around the tomb where the current reconstructed tomb—the focus of the present church—now stands. This rotunda is often referred to, both now and in historical records, as the Anastasis ("resurrection").

Between the rotunda and the basilica church was the Holy Garden. According to Coüasnon, the Holy Garden was enclosed on all four sides by a portico set on a row of columns, thus creating a colonnaded, rectangular courtyard. Beyond the porticoed courtyard, on the rotunda side, was a wall with eight gates that led to the rotunda. Corbo, on the other hand, reconstructs columns on only three sides. (Thus, he calls the garden courtyard the *triportico*.) Corbo would omit the portico on the rotunda side, adjacent to the eight-gated wall. He is probably right.

Thus the complex of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre stood until the Persian invasion of 614 A.D. At that time it was damaged by fire, but not, as once supposed, totally destroyed. When the Persians conquered Jerusalem, they destroyed many of its churches, but not the Holy Sepulchre.

The situation was different, however, in 1009 A.D. On the order of the Fatimid Caliph of Cairo, El Khakim, the entire church complex—the basilica, the rotunda, the tomb inside the rotunda and the portico between the rotunda and the basilica—was badly damaged and almost completely destroyed.

The basilica was gone forever, razed to the ground. Only the 1968 discovery of the foundation of the western apse of the basilica allows its placement to be fixed with certainty (although previous reconstructions had fixed its location correctly).

The rotunda, however, was preserved to a height of about five feet. Between 1042 and 1048 the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX Monomachus attempted to restore the complex. He was most successful with the rotunda, which was restored with only slight change (see plan, pg. 25). Where the Constantinian rotunda had three niches on three sides, Monomachus added a fourth. This new niche



*Art Resource, New York*

A mausoleum for Constantine's daughter. The rotunda of this elegant fourth-century Church of Santa Costanza in Rome may resemble the contemporaneous rotunda in Jerusalem surrounding Jesus' tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme, *Vol. I*

More than 1,000 years after Costanza's mausoleum was built, an engraver named De Brnyn depicted the Holy Sepulchre Church rotunda. Here, in his work from 1681, we see that the round enclosure— probably first built by Constantine in the fourth century—persists in the Crusader reconstruction of the church.



Scala/Art Resource, New York, NY

A first century B.C. round temple. Already 200 years old when Hadrian built his temple in Jerusalem, this structure in the Forum Boarium in Rome is evidence that Hadrian knew round temple structures. Dedicated to Hercules Victor, this temple adds plausibility to Bahat's suggestion that Hadrian's Jerusalem temple was also round.



Garo Nalbandian

The present rotunda, often called the Anastasis ("resurrection"), is the focal point of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The rotunda encloses the reconstructed tomb of Jesus, shown here. The rotunda, too, has been recently reconstructed incorporating some earlier elements.

was on the east side, the direction of prayer in most churches. The new niche was the largest of the niches and was no doubt the focus of prayer in the rotunda.

In front of the rotunda, Monomachus retained the open garden. One of the old colonnades (the northern one) was rebuilt by him and has been preserved to the present time, thus enabling us to study the character of Monomachus's restoration.

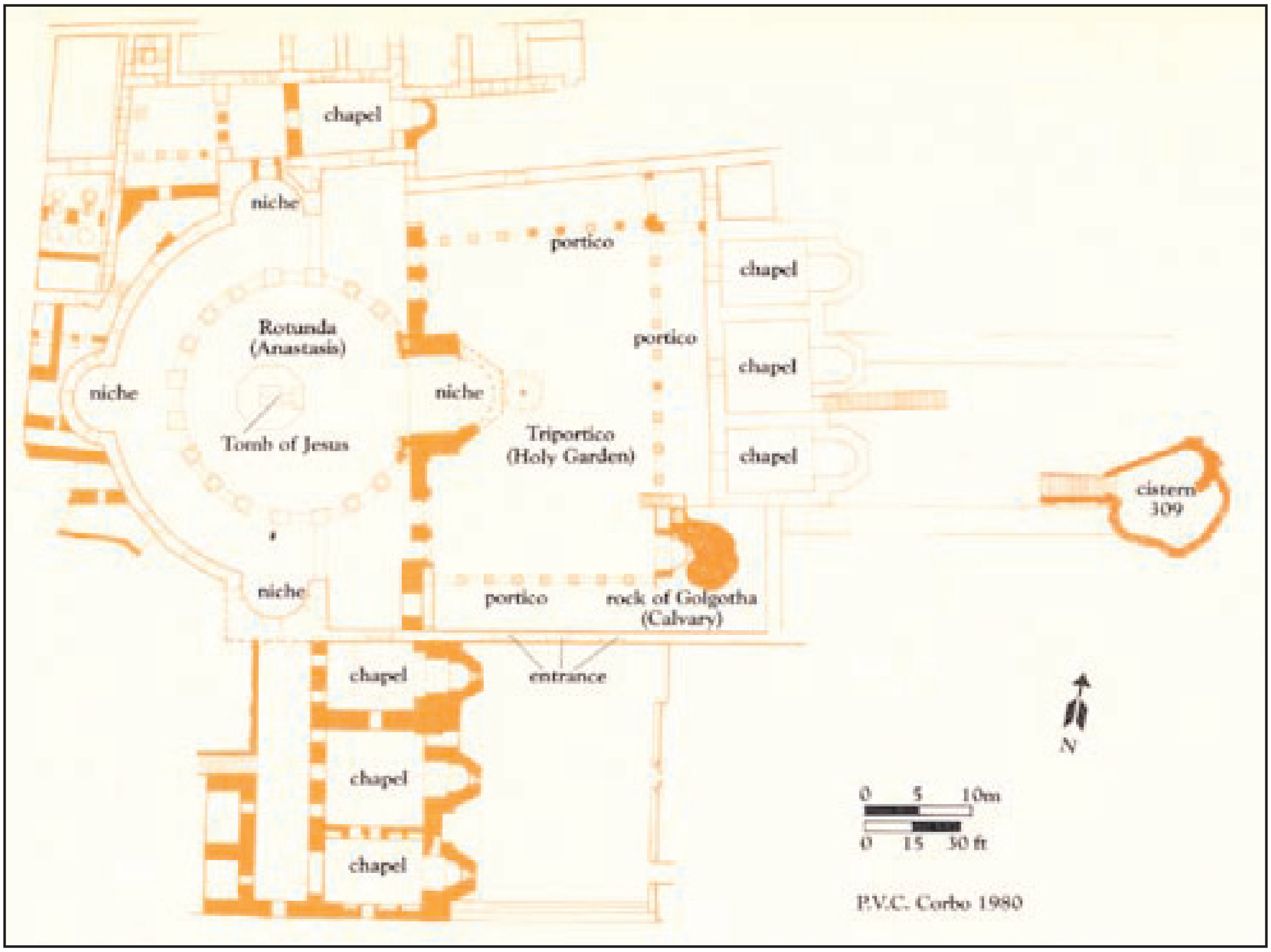
Instead of a basilica, Monomachus built three groups of chapels. One group, consisting of three chapels, abutted the old baptistery; a second group, also consisting of three chapels, was built near the site of the apse of the destroyed basilica (this group is known from historical documentation only); and the third consisted of a chapel north of the rotunda.

In the course of his reconstruction, Monomachus discovered a cistern where, according to tradition, Queen Helena had discovered the True Cross. Corbo believes, probably correctly, that this tradition originated only in the 11th century. (On archaeological grounds, the cistern dates to the 11th or 12th century.) Moreover, nothing was built to commemorate Helena's supposed discovery of the True Cross here until even later, in the Crusader period. Coüasnon, on the other hand, believed the tradition that Queen Helena found the True Cross here dated from Constantinian times. According to Coüasnon, Constantine built a small crypt in the cave-cistern. Coüasnon recognized, however, that the current chapel of St. Helena dates to the Crusader period. At that time, the famous chapel of St. Helena, which is a focus of interest even now, was constructed partially in and partially adjacent to the cistern.

The Crusaders, who ruled Jerusalem from 1099 to 1187, also rebuilt the church, essentially in the form we know it today. The rotunda (or Anastasis) enclosing the tomb was maintained as the focus of the new structure. In the area of the porticoed garden in front of the rotunda, the Crusaders built a nave with a transept, forming a cross, and installed a high altar.

The traditional rock of Golgotha, where Jesus had been crucified, was enclosed—for the first time—in this church. In Hadrian's time, the rock of Golgotha had protruded above the Hadrianic enclosure-platform. According to Jerome, a statue of Venus/Aphrodite was set on top of the protruding rock. This statue was no doubt removed by Christians who venerated the rock. When Constantine built his basilica, the rock was squared in order to fit it into a chapel in the southeast corner of the Holy Garden. As noted, in the Crusader church the rock was enclosed in a chapel within the church itself. The floor level of this chapel, where the rock may still be seen, is almost at the height of the top of the rock. Because of this, a lower chapel, named for Adam, was installed to expose the lower part of the rock. This lower chapel served as a burial chapel in the 12th century for the Crusader kings of the Later Kingdom of Jerusalem. These tombs were removed after the great fire of 1808.

Father Corbo's book may well be the last word on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for a long time to come. Despite its monumental nature, it is, alas, not beyond criticism. It is in no sense an archaeological report, despite the reference in the title of Corbo's book to the "archaeological aspects" of the site. Almost no finds are described




Il Santo Sepolcro Di Gerusalemme*, Vol. II, Plate 4*

Plan of the 11th century reconstruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, by Constantine IX Monomachus. This restoration—completed in 1048— followed the destruction of the church in 1009 by the Fatimid Caliph, El Khakim. Black areas are extant. The rotunda was reconstructed and an additional niche added on the east. The Holy Garden was also retained. The Constantinian basilica, however, almost disappeared. In its place, east of the Holy Garden, were three chapels, known only from literary sources. A second group of three chapels was built south of the rotunda, and another chapel was added north of the rotunda. The entrance to the complex was from the south into the Holy Garden. The present entrance is in the same place.

and it is impossible to understand from Father Corbo's plates and text why a particular wall is ascribed to one period or another. This is a pity. Precise descriptions of these finds and their loci would have increased our knowledge significantly, not only with respect to the history of the church, but also with respect to the study of medieval pottery, coins and other artifacts. It is also important that scholars be able to check for themselves the attribution of walls and other architectural elements. In photograph No. 207, for example, we are shown a fragment attributed by Corbo to Baldwin V's tombstone, but it is almost impossible to understand where it was found, as only a general location is mentioned.[4] Unlike many archaeological reports, Corbo gives us no loci index. Thus anyone who wishes to study thoroughly a particular locus, its contents, location and attribution to a particular period is completely stymied.

Corbo has provided no plans superimposing various periods. There is no grid where one can reconstruct the continuity of the various walls and their relation to one another. One must rely solely on the author's assumptions. He apparently justifies his attribution of walls and floors to particular periods principally on his concept of the shape of the church in a particular period.

There are other shortcomings: The meaning of the shading in some of the plates is not always given in the legend, so it is not always clear what the shading refers to. The location of the sections is not always shown on the plans, so, for example in plate 52, it is not clear where the section of the cistern in plate 53 is located.

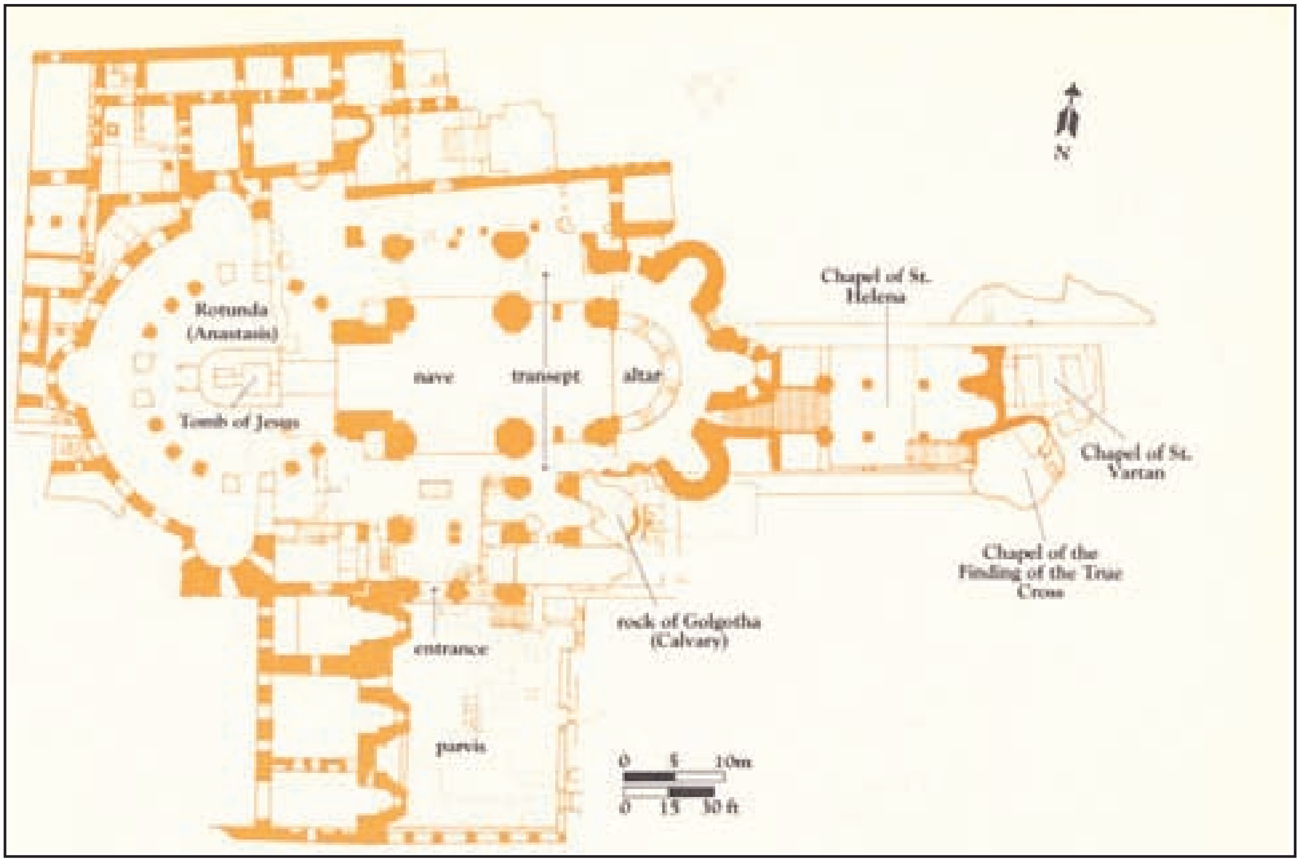


Garo Nalbandian

The Chapel of St. Helena where, according to tradition, Queen Helena in 326 A.D. found the true cross. The chapel is now at the bottom of a stairway at the eastern end of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In Crusader times, the chapel was a large cistern used for water storage. Before the Crusaders, nothing had been built here to commemorate Queen Helena's finding of the true cross; therefore, the tradition is most likely a late one, probably of the 11th century A.D.

No heights are marked on the plans. Thus, for example, when we examine the author's extremely important reconstruction of the pagan structure that preceded the rotunda, we cannot know whether a certain wall is a retaining wall, which it probably was, or a free-standing wall.

From the archaeological point of view, the book under review is definitely unsatisfactory. There is not even a discussion of the stylistic development of the building—the rotunda, for example, or the Crusader church as part of the development of the Romanesque European church. Nevertheless, no student of this great structure can afford to be without these volumes.



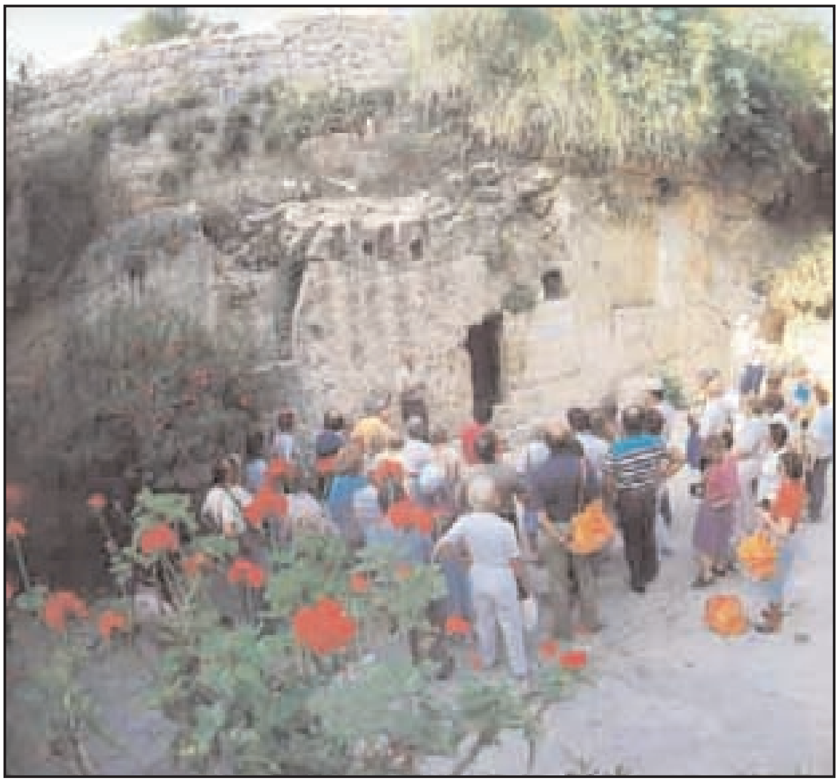

Israel Exploration Journal, *Vol. 35, Nos. 2–3 (1985), p. 109*

The Crusader Holy Sepulchre Church. The form of the church as we know it today is that given it in the 12th century by the Crusaders. The rotunda encloses the tomb of Jesus as before, but now for the first time the rock of Golgotha is enclosed within the church. In the area of the porticoed Holy Garden, the Crusaders built a basilica with a nave, a transept and a high altar at its eastern end.

In the area of the subterranean cisterns on the eastern end of the complex, three chapels were constructed: the chapels of St. Helena, of the Finding of the True Cross and of St. Vartan. Signs of an ancient quarry may be seen in St. Vartan's chapel.

# The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?

## By Gabriel Barkay



Richard Nowitz

Pilgrims and tourists visit the Garden Tomb, a burial chamber in Jerusalem often proposed as the burial place of Jesus. The tomb's serene setting amid geraniums and oleander provides a place for meditation and prayer, as well as respite from the bustle of modern Jerusalem just a few feet beyond the walls.

To the tour guide's left, a shadow-darkened doorway marks the entrance to the cave carved into the hill. The dressed stones next to the doorway, topped by a small window, were not built when the chamber was hewn, but sometime after.

On the hill, above, left, a stone wall separates the grounds of the Garden Tomb from the adjacent Moslem cemetery. On the northwest slope of this hill is the Dominican monastery of St. Étienne.

Recent archaeological investigations have revealed that both the Garden Tomb and two cave tombs at St. Étienne were carved into the same rocky escarpment. These tombs were all part of the northern cemetery of Jerusalem during the First Temple period, in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The Garden Tomb cave was later reused, but this was in the Byzantine period and in the Middle Ages, not in the time of Jesus.

First-time visitors to Jerusalem are often surprised to learn that two very different sites vie for recognition as the burial place of Jesus. One is, as its name implies, the Holy Sepulchre Church; it is located in a crowded area of the Christian Quarter inside the walled Old City. The other, known as the Garden Tomb, is a burial cave located outside the Old City walls, in a peaceful garden just north of the Damascus Gate.

The case for the Holy Sepulchre Church as the burial place of Jesus has already been made for **BAR** readers.[a]

But what of the Garden Tomb? What is its claim to authenticity?

The year 1983 marked a centennial for the Garden Tomb; in 1883 the newly discovered cave was identified by the military hero of his day, General Charles George Gordon, as the tomb of Jesus. That identification caused, and still provokes, waves of controversy among pilgrims who wish to visit authentic sites of the Gospels. Even today the Garden Tomb is one of Jerusalem's best known sites; it is visited by well over a hundred thousand tourists and pilgrims a year, visitors who imbibe its serene and sacral atmosphere. Indeed, the tranquility of the Garden Tomb provides a striking contrast to the city noise and tumult just outside.

With the development of archaeological research in the Holy Land, it seems appropriate to look anew into this famous cave and the question of its authenticity, especially in light of the increasing accumulation of data on the architectural



*Archive of The Palestine Exploration Fund*

Conrad Schick (1822–1901) came to Jerusalem in 1846 from Germany as a missionary and became a correspondent for the Palestine Exploration Fund and scholarly European journals. In 1867, when a farmer trying to hew a cistern into a rocky hill discovered the cave that would become known as the Garden Tomb, Schick visited the site and wrote up a brief report. Some years later, the suggestion was made that the cave had been the burial place of Jesus. Schick revisited the cave, excavated in front of it and issued a new, detailed report.

characteristics of burial caves in Jerusalem and in other areas of Judah during various ancient periods.

The burial cave known as the Garden Tomb was found in 1867 by a peasant who wanted to cultivate the land there. While trying to cut a cistern into the rock, he accidentally came upon the cave. Conrad Schick, the Jerusalem correspondent for several learned societies in Europe, visited the cave soon afterward, and it is from his reports that we first learn of the discovery. One of the few Europeans then living in Jerusalem, Schick assumed the task of keeping up-to-date scientific journals of news from the Holy City. His first report about the cave was published in 1874.[1] It is an innocent enough description of yet another Jerusalem burial cave, similar in style to others about which he periodically reported to his learned societies. According to Schick's account, the cave was filled to half its height with a mixture of earth and human bones. At the entrance to the cave, he saw an iron bar and hinge. He also observed a human skeleton in the balk, or wall, of a trench that had been dug to find the mouth of the cave. After Schick's first visit, the owner of the cave cleared it of its contents in order to use it.

In 1892, Schick published a second report,[2] which was much more detailed because it was written after the suggestion that the cave might be the tomb of Jesus. Obviously, the tomb then assumed far more importance than the hundreds of other caves already known in and around Jerusalem. Schick reported that he had conducted a small dig in front of the cave and had found some vaulted chambers that leaned against the rocky escarpment of the hill in which the cave had been hewn. He also reported the clearing of a large cistern of the Crusader period within the perimeter of the garden, southwest of the cave.

Another description of the Garden Tomb is found in the Jerusalem volume of the *Survey of Western Palestine* conducted in 1884 by Charles Warren and Claude Regnier Conder for the London-based Palestine Exploration Fund. Warren and Conder mention that excavations were conducted in the garden in 1875, unearthing mostly Crusader remains.

In 1883, General Charles George Gordon arrived in Jerusalem, an event that proved to be critically important in the history of the Garden Tomb. Gordon, the son of a general, was the best-known and best-loved British soldier of his era. He served with distinction in the Crimean War and later went to China in the expedition of 1860, taking part in the capture of Peking. As commander of the "Ever-Victorious Army," he successfully suppressed the Taiping Rebellion. For his service in China, he was decorated by the emperor, and quickly became known as "Chinese" Gordon. In 1873, with the consent of his government, Gordon entered the service of the Khedive, the Turkish viceroy in Egypt. While in this post, he mapped part of the White Nile and Lake Albert. In 1877, he was appointed governor-general of the Sudan, where he waged a vigorous campaign against slave traders. On one occasion, he relieved Egyptian garrisons threatened by a revolutionary force by walking into the rebel camp, accompanied only by an interpreter, to discuss the situation—a bold move that proved successful when a contingent of rebels joined Gordon's forces.

When he arrived in Jerusalem in 1883, Gordon was already a luminary crowned with a halo of heroism. He stayed in Palestine less than a year. In January 1884, he was dispatched to Khartoum to report on the best way of evacuating the British from the Sudan after the revolt of the Mahdi. Although he was eventually ordered to evacuate Khartoum, Gordon took it upon himself to attempt to defeat the Mahdi. Gordon's personal heroism was unexcelled, but finally the Mahdi besieged Khartoum with Gordon trapped inside. Gordon was killed two days before a relief expedition arrived from England.

Even by 1883, when he arrived in Jerusalem, Gordon had a worldwide reputation as a military figure surrounded by an aura of mystery. He was the grand representative of the Victorian era, the personification of heroism, of duty, of loyalty to the British Empire and of faith in God. At the same time, he was an ambitious individualist, an adventurous crusader, and a captivating story-teller. Moreover, his deep religious consciousness went beyond the rational—indeed, reaching into spiritual hallucination. Motivated by a religious compulsion, Gordon came to Jerusalem to meditate on questions of faith that had perplexed him from his youth.

Immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem, Gordon identified the hill in which the Garden Tomb cave is located as the hill of Golgotha, mentioned in the Gospels as the site of the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, John 19:17).

This hill is located just north of the northern wall of the Old City. It was and is the site of a Moslem cemetery named Es-Szâhirah (meaning "the place of the awakened"). The hill is separated from the escarpment on which the Old City wall is built by a rock-hewn depression that forms a kind of dry moat. The hill itself, today called El-Edhemîyeh (named after Ibrahim el-Edhem—the founder of a Moslem spiritual sect in the eighth century), has rock-hewn sides creating a vertical escarpment of its own. The Garden Tomb cave is hewn into the vertical escarpment on the western slope of the hill, just 820 feet (250 m) north of Damascus Gate. Today the cave is located in a large, walled garden owned by the Garden Tomb Association.



*The Library of Congress*

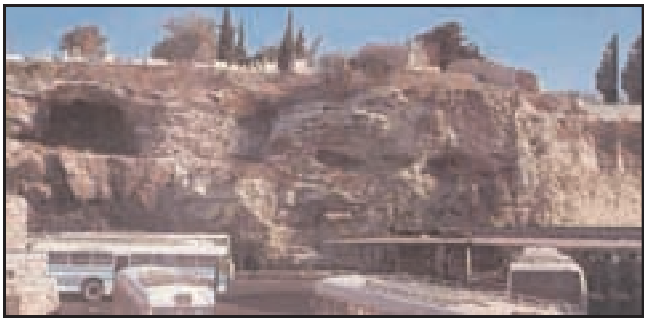
General Gordon. A renowned British military hero, Charles George Gordon fought in the Crimean War, in China and in Egypt. When he arrived in Jerusalem in 1883, one of his first actions was to combine his religious fervor with a general's skill and confidence in interpreting terrain. After making sketches for a short report, he announced that the hill in which the Garden Tomb cave was hewn was Golgotha ("skull" in Aramaic), the site of Jesus' crucifixion (see drawing).

In the same report, Gordon assigned a location for the Garden of Eden. He picked a true tropical paradise of giant trees and lush vegetation—the Seychelles island of Praslin in the Indian Ocean, a thousand miles from the East African coast.

Just north of the Garden Tomb is the Monastery of St. Étienne (St. Stephen) of the French Dominican Fathers. On the grounds of the monastery is the École Biblique et Archéologique Française—the French School of Bible and Archaeology. On the southern side of the hill into which the Garden Tomb was hewn is located the central bus station of East Jerusalem—across from the Old City wall.

The Garden Tomb is approached by a narrow street now named after Conrad Schick. Schick Street exits onto Nablus Road, which is the main road leading north from Damascus Gate.

Even before Gordon identified this hill as Golgotha, other scholars had mentioned this possibility.[b] In 1881, Conder suggested that another burial cave cut into a rocky outcrop just west of the Garden Tomb was the tomb of Jesus.[c] Conder's suggestion was based on the identification of the hill called El-Edhemiyeh as Golgotha (see map).



*Hershel Shanks*

"Hill of Golgotha". Identified in 1883 by General Charles George Gordon as the site of the crucifixion, this rocky hill stands just north of Jerusalem's Old City. Tombstones of a Moslem cemetery cluster on the hilltop, while a modern bus station crowds its base. Hewn into this hill—farther to the north—are two burial cave complexes: the Garden Tomb, where, some believe, Jesus was laid to rest, and the tombs on the grounds of St. Étieenne's monastery.



Matson Collection/The Library of Congress

In another view of "Golgotha", taken at the end of the 19th century by the famed Jerusalem photographer G. Eric Matson, only a few tombstones dot the hilltop. At the far left, the flying buttresses of St. Étienne's church mark the location of this monastery complex. On the grounds of St. Étienne's, a flight of steps leads underground to one of the burial caves. In the Iron Age (eighth or seventh century B.C.) when these burial caves and the cave of the Garden Tomb were hewn out of the hill, they were all part of the same cemetery.

Although Gordon visited the cave of the Garden Tomb and, no doubt, regarded it as Jesus' tomb, oddly enough, he doesn't mention it in his writings; he concerns himself mainly with the identification of the hill as Golgotha.

This identification was based on some fantastic conclusions concerning the topography of Jerusalem. Gordon visualized the city in the shape of a human skeleton. In his imagination, the skull of the skeleton was in the north (Golgotha means "the skull" in Aramaic); the pelvis of the skeleton was at the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount; the legs extended southward on the ridge identified with the City of David; and the feet were at the Pool of Siloam (see drawing). Since, in Gordon's imagination, the hill north of Damascus Gate formed the skull of the skeleton, Gordon identified the hill as Golgotha.

These speculative identifications were published posthumously in 1885, after Gordon's courageous last stand at Khartoum. His identifications gained fame and publicity, not for any scientific validity, but because of Gordon's compelling personality and his heroically tragic death.

A long and extremely bitter dispute concerning the authenticity of the site followed Gordon's identification of the hill as Golgotha and the consequent identification of the cave in its western escarpment as Jesus' tomb. The authenticity of the tomb was supported mainly by Protestants. It was attacked mainly by Catholics, who held to the traditional identification of Jesus' tomb within the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The dispute was conducted in scores of articles in a number of journals. Most of these articles have a theological and apologetic, rather than a scientific bent. None concerning the cave, nor any useful analysis of the archaeology of the site.



Garo Nalbandian

Cave "eyes" of General Gordon's "Skull hill" are seen here closeup in the sheer Jerusalem hill that conceals a vast underground cemetery.

Capitalizing on the fame of Chinese Gordon, the site was soon named "Gordon's Tomb" or "Gordon's Calvary." (Calvary is the Latin form of Golgotha.) Later the name evolved into the "Garden Tomb," perhaps because of the similarity of the words "Gordon" and "garden," but more probably because of the mention of a garden in the New Testament in connection with Jesus' burial. In John 19:41–42, we learn that "at the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, not yet used for burial. There, because the tomb was near at hand and it was the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, they laid Jesus."

In 1894, the cave and the surrounding garden were purchased by the Garden Tomb Association for £2,000 sterling raised by an influential group of Englishmen that included the Archbishop of Canterbury. This association still owns and maintains the site. After the purchase, the new owners probably cleared the entire facade of the cave and removed the debris and ruins that had accumulated

in front of it, although no reference to the clearing operations is made in contemporary records. The new owners also created a beautiful walled garden of moving serenity.

In 1904, Karl Beckholt, who was serving as Danish consul in Jerusalem and as warden of the Garden Tomb, conducted a small excavation in the yard of the Garden Tomb. He found some objects, which were published 20 years later by a Jerusalem scholar and Anglican clergyman named James Edward Hanauer.[d3] This 1924 publication renewed the bitter dispute about the location of the authentic tomb of Jesus. The opposing positions were summarized in a sharply worded article written from the Catholic point of view by Louis-Hugues Vincent, one of the Dominican scholars at the École Biblique. Father Vincent, a leading scholar on the archaeology and history of Jerusalem, defended the position that the Garden Tomb cave was of the Byzantine period. He entitled his article "The Garden Tomb—History of a Myth."[4]

In 1955, the Garden Tomb Association sponsored a small excavation in the garden area. Unfortunately, nothing is known about this dig; it was never published.

The dispute over the authenticity of the Garden Tomb was again summarized in 1975 in a book entitled *The Search for the Authentic Tomb of Jesus* by W. S. McBirnie,[5] who advocates the Garden Tomb's authenticity. McBirnie's book, however, is not based on any archaeological information, nor is the author knowledgeable about the history of the area in ancient times.

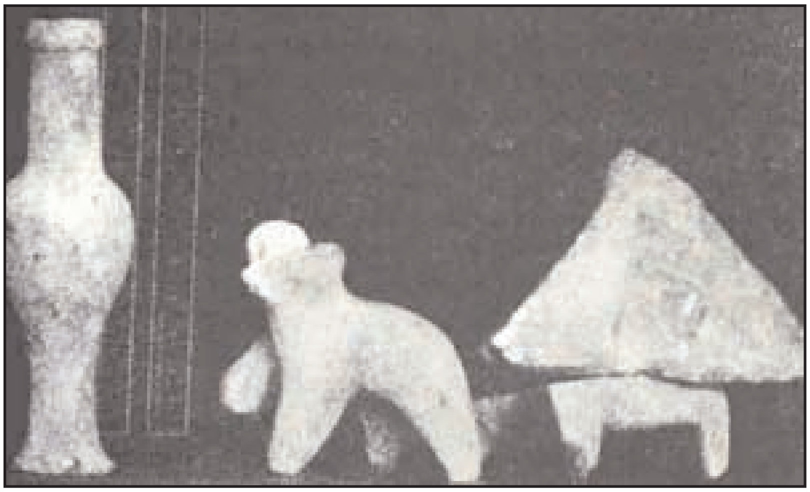
Thus, almost all published articles dealing with the Garden Tomb from its discovery through 1975 have been polemical, written to prove certain theological presuppositions. Except for the first article by Conrad Schick, who reported the actual discovery of the cave, there has been no objective, factual and archaeological discussion of the Garden Tomb.




Matson Collection/Library of Congress

Gordon's sketch of Jerusalem. Gordon visualized an imaginary skeleton superimposed on the city of Jerusalem: he fixed the skeleton's pelvis at the Dome of the Rock, its legs on the City of David and its feet at the Siloam Pool. With this alignment, the hill containing the Garden Tomb had to be the skull. Gordon even saw a resemblance to a skull in the rocky hill with its dark cave "eyes."

To understand why this is so, we need to look at the historical situation in the late 19th century. The growing western interest in the ancient Near East, the Holy Land and Jerusalem brought hordes of visitors and pilgrims who took a new and often critical approach to the traditional holy sites. More and more Protestants came to Jerusalem, and they began to question the authenticity of the holy sepulcher. Located as it is in the midst of a densely built-up area of the Old City, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre did not seem to the Protestants to be a suitable place, outside the city, as Jewish law required, where Jewish dead would have been buried in the early Roman period. The traditional site of the sepulcher within the church was in those days dark, dismal and frequently filthy. It was crowded with priests, monks and pilgrims, mainly from Eastern countries, who often bickered with each other over rights to light candles and to hold ceremonies in various parts of the church. The Protestant newcomers did not feel at home here and could not imagine that this site could be the authentic burial place of Jesus. In this frame of mind, they welcomed any suggestion locating Jesus' tomb in a place that would better fit the tastes of Protestant Westerners, especially because the Protestants were wholly without



PEFQS, *photographed by James Edward Hanauer*

Iron Age finds from the Garden Tomb. Excavated in 1904 by Karl Beckholt, warden of the Garden Tomb, this pottery was photographed and published 20 years later by James Edward Hanauer, a Jerusalem scholar who died in the 1930s.

Hanauer called the objects the handiwork of medieval pilgrims who were filling idle hours in the Holy City. But two of these finds, the animal, middle, and the bed or couch, right bottom, closely resemble objects recently excavated in Jerusalem and Judah, objects that are securely dated to Iron Age II, eighth to seventh centuries B.C. The triangular shaped object that appears to be resting on the couch is probably medieval, and the spindle bottle, left, dates to the Hellenistic period, late first century B.C.

This photograph is all that remains of the 1904 finds. They were "so it was said…taken away by a 'Turkish' German officer during the First World War," Hanauer reported.

any proprietary share in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was divided among the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian and Coptic Churches.

The earliest recorded tradition about Jesus' burial in the Holy Sepulchre is about three centuries after the Crucifixion. The New Testament itself gives no clue whatever as to the location of Golgotha and the tomb of Jesus. The name Golgotha has not been preserved in any form in any written source in antiquity, either Jewish or non-Jewish. It is not attested in geographical names in or around Jerusalem. This was enough to lead many wishful Protestants to reject the authenticity of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On the other hand, there was never any sound scientific basis for locating the tomb of Jesus in the area of the Garden Tomb. The identification of the Garden Tomb as the tomb of Jesus thus reflects the psychology and atmosphere of late 19th-century Jerusalem, rather than any new evidence—scientific, textual or archaeological.

In 1974, I decided to investigate the matter afresh. I did so in a series of visits beginning in the latter part of the year.

I have concluded that the cave of the Garden Tomb was originally hewn in the Iron Age II, sometime in the eighth or seventh century B.C. It was reused for burial purposes in the Byzantine period (fifth to seventh centuries A.D.), so it could not have been the tomb of Jesus. All lines of reasoning support this conclusion.

Although there are numerous burial caves in the area north of Damascus Gate, most of them were excavated about a 100 years ago, when archaeology was in its infancy. Modern scholars, however, have now been able to date these burial caves to the Iron Age. (See "Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple," by the author and Amos Kloner, in this issue.) In addition, a number of newly discovered burial caves have been excavated in various areas of Judah. These, too, are very well dated to the Iron Age, based on well-dated inscriptions and pottery and other artifacts found in the burial caves. All these dated caves now give us a clear picture of the architectural features and layout of Iron Age burial caves.

We now know that the area north of Damascus Gate was an extensive cemetery during the Iron Age. And the Garden Tomb cave is right in the middle of it, between the St. Étienne tombs on the north and two Iron Age tombs on the south, recently published by Amihai Mazar.[6] A chronological, as well as a geographical, link among all these tombs is certainly suggested.

Let us look more closely at some of this evidence.

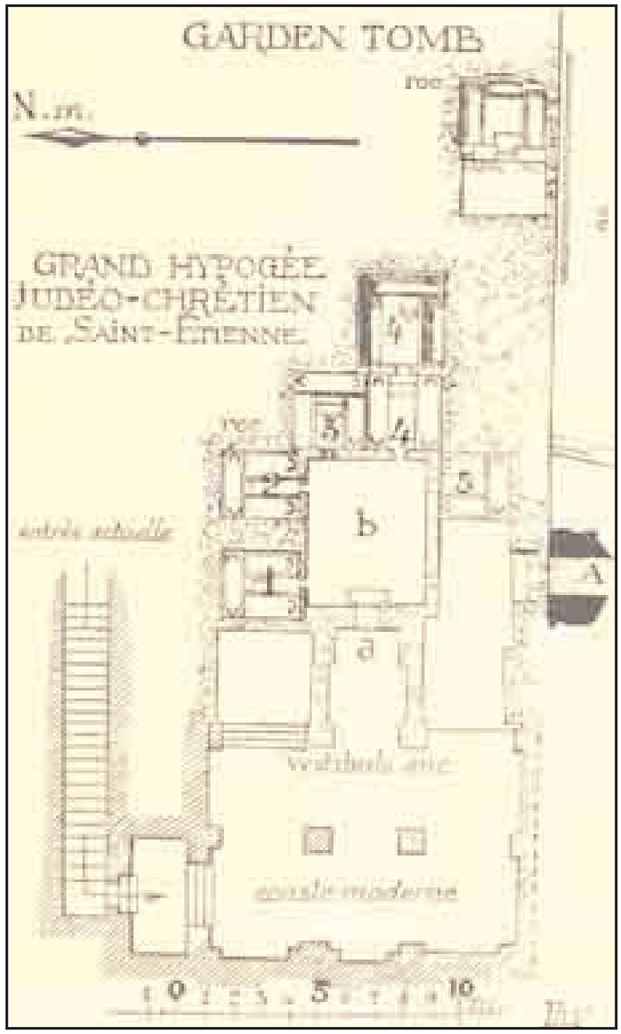
In 1974–1975, Amos Kloner and I conducted an archaeological investigation and survey of two large and magnificent complexes of

burial chambers in the courtyard of the Monastery of St. Étienne, just north of the Garden Tomb. Kloner, then District Archaeologist of Jerusalem, is an expert second to none on early Roman tombs in Jerusalem.

The conclusion of our work on the St. Étienne burial caves was that, contrary to earlier views dating the caves to the Roman period, these tombs date to the Iron Age—the time of the kings of Judah (eighth and seventh centuries B.C.). The Garden Tomb was probably part of the same cemetery as the St. Étienne tomb complexes. It lies only a few feet from Cave Complex Number 1 at St. Étienne and is hewn into the very same cliff.

In 1976, Amihai Mazar, whom **BAR** readers already know well,[e] published two burial caves near the Damascus Gate in the area just south of the cave of the Garden Tomb. These two burial caves had been discovered in 1937 during the British Mandate, but had never been published. Mazar found the unpublished data of the 1937 excavation in old Department of Antiquities records and based his own conclusions on these records. Mazar reported that these burial caves were originally hewn in the Iron Age. His evidence included photographs of pottery taken *in situ* in 1937, pottery he could now identify as having typical late Iron Age shapes.

Moreover, not a single tomb from Second Temple times has been found in this area. Just as we now know much more about Iron Age tombs, we also know more about tombs from the Second Temple period. Jesus lived in the late Second Temple period; the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.) A great number of burial caves from the Second Temple period have been discovered in other areas of Jerusalem, but not one in the area surrounding the Garden Tomb. By the Second Temple period, Jerusalemites had located their cemeteries further north. The southernmost burial cave of the Second Temple period is the luxurious "Tombs of the Kings," about 1,970 feet (600 m) north of the Garden Tomb.[f]

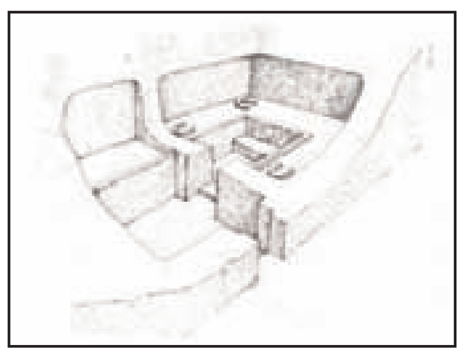



Revue Biblique

The relationship between the two-chambered Garden Tomb and the large Cave Complex 1 at St. Étienne's monastery, separated by only two meters, is evident in this plan published by Louis-Hugues Vincent in 1925.

An examination of various characteristics of the typical First Temple burial caves also leads to the conclusion that the Garden Tomb cave is an Iron Age tomb.

For example, let us look at the basic arrangement of the rooms or chambers. The Garden Tomb cave consists of two adjoining chambers, one beside the other. The entrance from the outside to this two-room burial cave is through the northern room. After entering this northern chamber, one sees, on the right (south), the entrance to the second room or inner chamber. Thus, both the entrance chamber and the inner chamber have one wall formed by the outer face of the escarpment. This is not a natural arrangement for a two-chamber burial tomb. We would expect the inner chamber to be cut behind the entrance chamber, further under the rock, rather than at the side of the entrance chamber where there would be a danger, in the course of hewing it out, of accidentally piercing and breaking through the outer wall of the escarpment. To avoid this



Erez Cohen

Originally, the burial chambers in the Garden Tomb had burial benches with rims and horseshoe-shaped headrests. In the inner chamber, steps lead up to the burial benches, where three bodies could be laid to rest. In the Byzantine period, however, these burial benches were carved out to form troughs, or sarcophagi (see photograph).



Richard Nowitz

Two-chambered Garden Tomb. Stepping down from the entrance threshold to the northern room of the tomb, the visitor can see the adjoining southern room through a protective iron screen. In the Second Temple period, two chambered burial caves were usually hewn according to a different plan: the second chamber was cut behind the first, not next to it, as is the case with the Garden Tomb. During the First Temple period, many two chambered tombs had the rooms one beside the other.

risk, burial caves of the Second Temple period usually have the two rooms aligned one behind the other. In contrast, a number of First Temple burial caves are cut on the plan of the Garden Tomb cave—with one room beside the other. This is the case, for example, with the famous burial cave of the "Royal Steward" in the Siloam Village, east of the Temple Mount. Two inscriptions were found on the facade of this cave, which leave no doubt as to the date of this tomb. Professor Nahman Avigad identified it as the Royal Steward's tomb. The longer inscription reads as follows: "This is [the sepulcher of …; ] yahu who is over the house. There is no silver and no gold here but [his bones] and the bones of his slave-wife with him. Cursed be the man who will open this." The other inscription refers to the plan of the cave—with one room at the side of the other—*ḤDR BKTP HṢR[YḤ] (ḥeder beketeph hatzariaḥ)*, "a room at the side of the monument." This inscription was intended to prevent someone from hewing out another burial chamber beside the one visible in the outer facade, and thereby accidentally breaking into the inner chamber because he didn't know about the inner chamber hewn beside the entrance chamber.

Another First Temple tomb with this same plan was excavated on the slope of Mt. Zion.[g] In this tomb, an abundance of pottery vessels and an inscribed seal were found *in situ*, thus enabling us to date the tomb with certainty to the seventh century B.C.

Still a third burial cave with this plan was found quite near the Garden Tomb, on the premises of the convent of the White Sisters on Nablus Road. The architectural features in this tomb, such as right-angled cornices where the walls join with the ceiling and raised burial benches, enable us to date it to the Iron Age. (This cave has not yet been published.)

A number of other burial caves from the First Temple period with this same plan have also been found outside Jerusalem—Cave Number 9 in the Iron Age II cemetery at Beth Shemesh and in a recently excavated Iron Age II burial cave at Sobah, west of Jerusalem.[7]

Thus, based on the plan of the rooms, the "Garden Tomb" cave appears to be a First Temple period, rather than a Second Temple period, burial cave.

A comparison of the Garden Tomb cave with the numerous Second Temple period burial caves in Jerusalem also emphasizes the very prominent differences. The outstanding characteristics of these Second Temple burial caves are burial niches (called *kokhim*; singular, *kokh*) cut vertically into the cave wall. *Kokhim* are very different structures from the burial benches extending lengthwise along the walls of the chamber, which characterize First Temple burial caves. In Second Temple burial caves we also typically find *arcosolia*. An *arcosolium* is an arch hewn into the wall of the cave forming the ceiling of a resting place or a shelf for stone coffins and ossuaries.[h] Finally the low burial benches in the niches of Second Temple tombs are carved around sunken floors. The Garden Tomb cave contains none of these elements of Second Temple burial caves. Another telltale sign of Second Temple tombs is evidence of the use of a so-called comb chisel, which had a toothed edge. This kind of chisel left marks that look like small parallel lines, called combing, on the rock surfaces. The Garden Tomb cave, however, contains no

sign of comb chiseling. Thus, dating this cave to the Hasmonean or Herodian period (first century B.C.-first century A.D.) seems completely out of the question.

A careful examination of the carving inside the Garden Tomb cave enables us to determine the original appearance of the typical First Temple burial benches in the inner chamber of the Garden Tomb cave, although the tomb was drastically altered in the Byzantine period. Originally, the inner chamber was carved so that a rock-cut burial bench extended from each wall except the entrance wall. On entering, one would see three burial benches in the shape of a squared-off U, like this: Π.

In the Byzantine period, the rock cut burial benches on which bodies had initially been laid to rest in the Iron Age were carved out to form basins, or carved in-place sarcophagi that resemble bathtubs or troughs. The carved-in-place sarcophagus opposite the entrance to the inner chamber is very short—less than 4¾ feet long on the inside. This was a result of carving out the two side burial benches to their full length, so that not enough room was left for the middle sarcophagus to extend along the full length of the wall. The traditional suggestion has been that this short resting place was intended for a child. I know of no parallel to such a short carved-out resting place.

Burial benches arranged on three walls opposite the entrance are typical of the First Temple period. Although hollowed-out sarcophagi cut into the rock, like those carved out in the Garden Tomb, are well known from the Byzantine period, in original Byzantine tombs they always appear under a vaulted ceiling, never under a flat ceiling like the ceiling in the Garden Tomb cave. Thus, on purely archaeological grounds, we can be sure that the cave was not originally hewn in the Byzantine period. Moreover, Byzantine sarcophagi are usually arranged parallel to one another, not around the three sides of the room like Iron Age burial benches. Indeed, I know of no other case where such trough-shaped sarcophagi from the Byzantine period are arranged around the room like this. It seems clear that the carving out of the rock-cut benches occurred when the cave was put to secondary use in the Byzantine period. The telltale hints of its original appearance, however, make plain that it was originally carved in the First Temple period.[i]

It would be nice if we knew what had been found in the Garden Tomb cave when it was cleaned and "excavated" from time to time. But our information is fragmentary at best.

I mentioned earlier that in 1924 James E. Hanauer published the results of Karl Beckholt's 1904 excavations at the Garden Tomb. Hanauer's publication includes photographs of several of the finds. In these photographs we can recognize a complete clay figurine of a four-legged animal (perhaps a horse), which is typically found in late Iron Age II sites. Such figurines have been found in other excavations both in Jerusalem and Judah. The animal figurine couldn't be accurately dated either when it was excavated by Beckholt, or when it was published by Hanauer. Now it can be dated on the basis of well-stratified and well-dated parallels. Another of Beckholt's finds was a clay model of a bed or couch, also apparently from Iron Age II.[j]



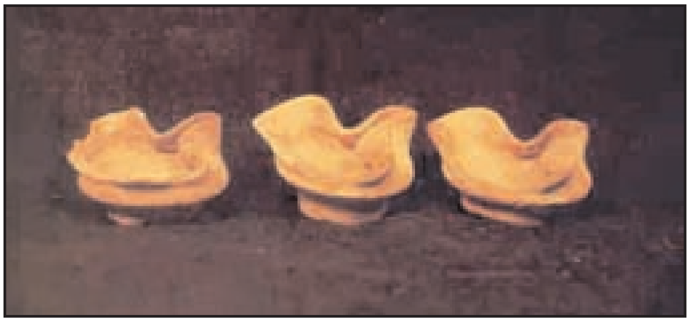
The inner chamber of the Garden Tomb. Originally, the chamber had burial benches with rims and horseshoe-shaped headrests (see drawing). In the Byzantine period, however, these burial benches were carved out to form troughs, or sarcophagi. The two side benches were completely carved out, leaving a sarcophagus only 57 inches long between them on the far wall—sometimes explained as a burial place for a child.

The chambers have flat ceilings, unlike Byzantine period tomb chambers, which all have vaulted ceilings. Although the Garden Tomb shows clear signs of reuse during the Byzantine period, its flat ceiling is one convincing piece of evidence that it was originally hewn in a much earlier period, the Iron Age.



*Richard Nowitz*

A crudely drawn cross marks a wall in the Garden Tomb's southern chamber. During the Byzantine period, fifth or sixth centuries A.D., the Garden Tomb was cleared of its bones and funerary offerings and was then used anew as a burial place. This Byzantine period cross and other Christian symbols on the tomb walls provide archaeologists with evidence to date the period of the tomb's reuse.



*Hedy Yehudaiov*

Oil lamps. Although their rims are partially broken, these lamps clearly display design features—pinched spouts and high pedestal bases—characteristic of Late Iron Age (seventh century B.C.) lamps in Judah. Discovered by the author in a storage closet near the cave of the Garden Tomb, the lamps may have been originally placed in the tomb during the Iron Age as funerary offerings, and removed in the Byzantine period when the tomb was cleared for reuse. Perhaps they were found in late 19th-century excavations conducted in front of the cave and then were placed in this closet.

In the course of my own investigation of the Garden Tomb, I came across an old collection of artifacts stored in a closet at the site. These included "Greek Fire" hand grenades from the Middle Ages, pottery fragments from the Crusader period, Byzantine sherds and a sling stone shaped like a tennis ball, a type well known from Iron Age sites. Of particular importance, however, were three chipped oil lamps with thick bases, typical of the late Iron Age in Judah, and a fragment of a rim of a burnished deep bowl with a handle attached to it, belonging to the same period.

The question naturally arises as to whether these artifacts in fact came from excavations in the area of the Garden Tomb. The Iron Age finds from Beckholt's excavations in the courtyard suggest that they did.[k] The fact that the oil lamps were chipped and broken off, and especially the fact that a relatively small fragment of the burnished bowl rim was retained, strengthen the suggestion that this pottery was discovered at the site and was not purchased on the antiquities market. As they are, they are of little or no commerical value and would be unlikely to have been saved if they were not found at the site.

It seems likely that the closet housed a collection of items that were uncovered in excavations at the front of the cave of the Garden Tomb. It is reasonable to assume that in the Byzantine period, when many of the caves in this region were opened up for renewed use, they were cleared of bones, funerary offerings and pottery vessels in order to make room for new burials. These Garden Tomb closet artifacts were the items most probably discovered during the cleanup excavations in front of the cave conducted by the Garden Tomb Association.

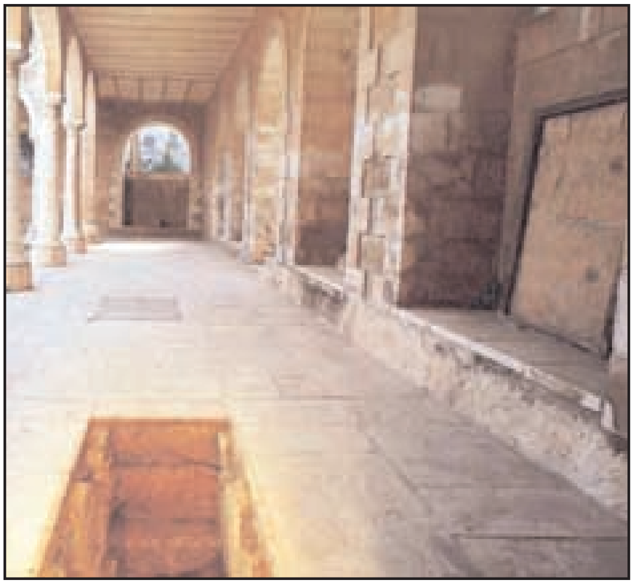
If the ceramic evidence were the only basis for the dating suggested here, it would certainly be insufficient, but in conjunction with other evidence, it bears considerable weight.

On the basis of all the evidence, it seems clear that the Garden Tomb burial cave was first hewn in Iron Age II, the First Temple period, the eighth–seventh centuries B.C. It was not again used for burial purposes until the Byzantine period.[l] So it could not have been the tomb in which Jesus was buried.

For further reading: L. Y. Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs," *Biblical Archeologist*, Summer 1981, pp. 171–177; Fall 1981, pp. 229–235; Winter 1981, pp. 43–53; Spring 1982, pp. 109–119; and A. Mazar, "Iron Age Burial Caves North of Damascus Gate Jerusalem," *Israel Exploration Journal* 26 (1976), pp. 1–8.

# The Garden Tomb and the Misfortunes of an Inscription

## By Jerome Murphy-O'Connor



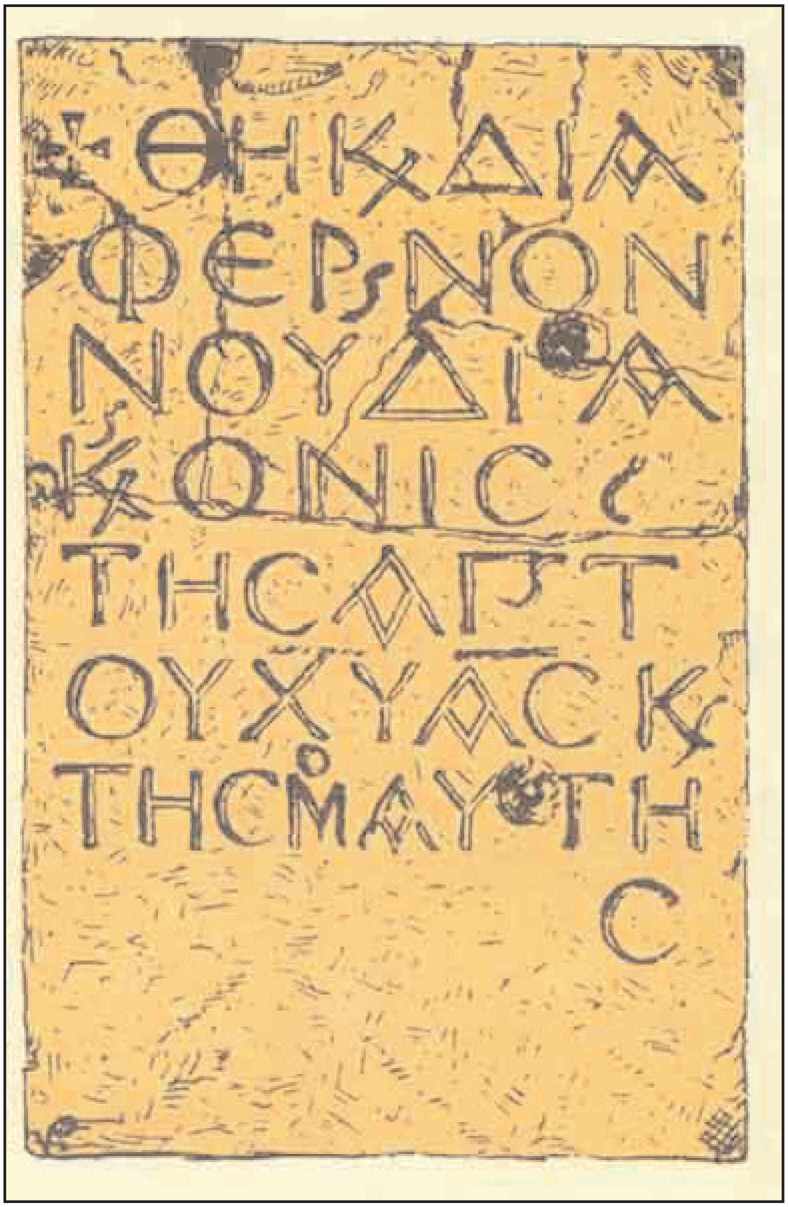
Richard Nowitz

St. Étienne's Church is located north of Jerusalem's Old City, just a hundred yards away from the Garden Tomb, a site that some believe to be the burial place of Jesus. In the portico surrounding St. Étienne's courtyard, steps lead down to a tomb where a Byzantine monk is buried.

The stone slab that originally covered this tomb entrance now leans against a nearby wall, right, where its short, Greek inscription can easily be read (see drawing).

On November 7, 1889, the *Northern Christian Advocate* (Syracuse, New York) published a note from an anonymous correspondent in Jerusalem: "There are strange rumors afloat about an inscription found at St. Stephen's [St. Étienne's monastery] (north of Damascus Gate). It is said that the Romanists are anxious to hush up the discovery, as it would damage the credit of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Its contents are to the following effect: 'I, Eusebius, have desired to be buried in this spot, which I believe to be close to the place where the body of my Lord lay.'"

Those who believed the Garden Tomb to be the burial place of Jesus were overjoyed. Here was unambiguous evidence that General Charles George Gordon had been correct, because St. Étienne's monastery lay immediately to the north of the Garden Tomb, the tomb Gordon had identified in 1883 as the burial site of Jesus. Protestants, who had never been permitted to worship in the Holy Sepulchre, scented victory. The pious fraud of the traditional site—the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—was on the verge of being exposed. Only this climate of thought explains why second-hand and highly dubious information printed in an obscure American newspaper should have been reproduced by the prestigious British-based Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) for the benefit of English readers.[1] The PEF went further and commissioned Conrad Schick, a German architect living in Jerusalem, to look into the facts.



Marie-Joseph Lagrange

Drawing of Greek inscription from St. Étienne's Church. See photograph.

The cause of all this excitement was a thick stone slab measuring 51 inches (1.3 m) long and 31 inches (80 cm) wide. It came to light in the early summer of 1889. The French Dominicans were excavating the atrium of the church of St. Stephen, which had been built by the Empress Eudocia in 460 A.D. When they took down a large medieval wall, they found that it had been built across a Byzantine grave cut into the rock below the pavement of the atrium. The inscribed slab, set into the pavement, covered the steps leading down to the tomb. Although cracked by the weight of the wall, all the pieces of the slab were in place. The seven-line Greek inscription was intact. The many abbreviations made it difficult to read at first, but very quickly consensus emerged among the experts that the wording was:

*Thēk*(ē) diapher(ousa) Nonnou
diak(onou) Onis(imou) tēs hag(ias) tou
Ch(risto)u A(nastaseō)s k(ai) tēs mo(nēs)
autēs.

"The private tomb of the deacon Nonnus
Onesimus of the Holy Resurrection of
Christ and of this monastery."

This text does not have a single word in common with the version reported in the Northern Christian Advocate. But it is easy to see what happened. In the Byzantine period the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was known as the Church of the Holy Resurrection. Those who had been looking desperately for evidence to support Gordon's theory heard the rumors of the discovery and took in only what suited them. It was enough that the inscription mentioned the Holy Sepulchre. On that they embroidered the version they wanted to find. If the deacon buried here served the Holy Resurrection, the nearby Garden Tomb must be the sepulcher of Jesus!

Far from identifying the church of St. Stephen with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the inscription does precisely the opposite. Nonnus Onesimus was a monk in the monastery attached to the church of St. Stephen; at the same time he served as deacon of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the Church of the Holy Resurrection). Such a combination was far from unusual. Cyril of Scythopolis, the sixth-century historian of Palestinian monasticism, mentions a "Gabriel who was both priest of the Holy Resurrection and superior (of the monastery) of St. Stephen" (*Life of St. Euthymius*, n. 39). The analogy with the Nonnus Onesimus inscription is striking.

As deacon of the Holy Sepulchre, Nonnus occupied the second highest position in the hierarchy of the Jerusalem church. This explains why he was granted the dignity of a private tomb where his remains could rest undisturbed.

In view of the highly acrimonious debate that developed between partisans of the Garden Tomb and the defenders of the traditional Holy Sepulchre,[2] mention must also be made of another inscription. It was found in 1885 in part of the tomb complex to which the Garden Tomb belongs, and reads simply, "Private tomb of the deacon Euthymius Pindiris." Since this contributed nothing to the proof that Gordon's supporters were seeking, it had attracted little attention. But the inscription remained a vague popular memory with bizarre consequences.

Confusion between the Nonnus inscription and the Euthymius inscription is already evident in the *Northern Christian Advocate* report. The place of discovery and the mention of the Holy Sepulchre belong to the Nonnus inscription. But the name Eusebius comes from the Euthymius inscription. There is enough similarity of sound between the elements of the two four-syllable names for the original Euthymius to be transmuted into the better known Eusebius.

Such confusion would have been impossible had the author of the *Northern Christian Advocate* report consulted the full publication of the Nonnus inscription by Father Germer-Durand in July 1889,[3] a full three months before the *Northern Christian Advocate* report appeared.

In a letter to the PEF, Professor Edward Hull proclaimed "In my opinion the recent excavations in the neighborhood of "Jeremiah's Grotto," … all tend to confirm the view that this spot is without doubt the site of the Crucifixion and of the Holy Sepulchre."[4]

Hull's interpretation was of less consequence than the totally misleading use of the Nonnus inscription in a long, and apparently scientific, article by James Edward Hanauer, which the PEF published in 1892. As the clinching argument in favor of the Garden Tomb as the authentic Holy Sepulchre, Hanauer noted "close by we have not only the ruins of the great church, dedicated in A.D. 460, to the proto-martyr Stephen, but also a medieval Christian cemetery known, whatever the reason may be, as that "Of the Holy Resurrection (Anastasia) of Christ."[5]

The least of the errors in this statement by Hanauer is the presentation of the tombstone of the deacon Nonnus as if it was the sign over the gate of a cemetery! But that did not worry those who wanted to believe. A committee was formed in England to buy the Garden Tomb as the probable site of the Holy Sepulchre. The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican bishops of Salisbury, Rochester, Ripon and Cashel, and the archdeacons of London and Westminster were listed as supporters of this cause in a letter to the London Times (September 22, 1892) appealing for funds.[6] A wily German speculator had secured the property and was holding out for much more money than it was worth.

Religious fervor was at such a pitch that even when sanity spoke with the sonorous voice of the Thunderer it fell on deaf ears. The precise references of Claude Conder (surveyor of western Palestine for the PEF in the late 19th century) to the inscriptions that had given rise to all the trouble—"Two inscriptions giving the names of deacons of the Greek church, and, by the characters used, dating from the Byzantine period, have been found near the tomb"[7]—was ignored. Father Marie-Joseph Lagrange's detailed report in 1894 on the excavations at St. Stephen's, with a full account of the Nonnus inscription, went unread.[8] Irish archaeologist Robert Macalister's insistence that neither of the inscriptions mentioned anyone buried near his Lord was of no avail.[9]

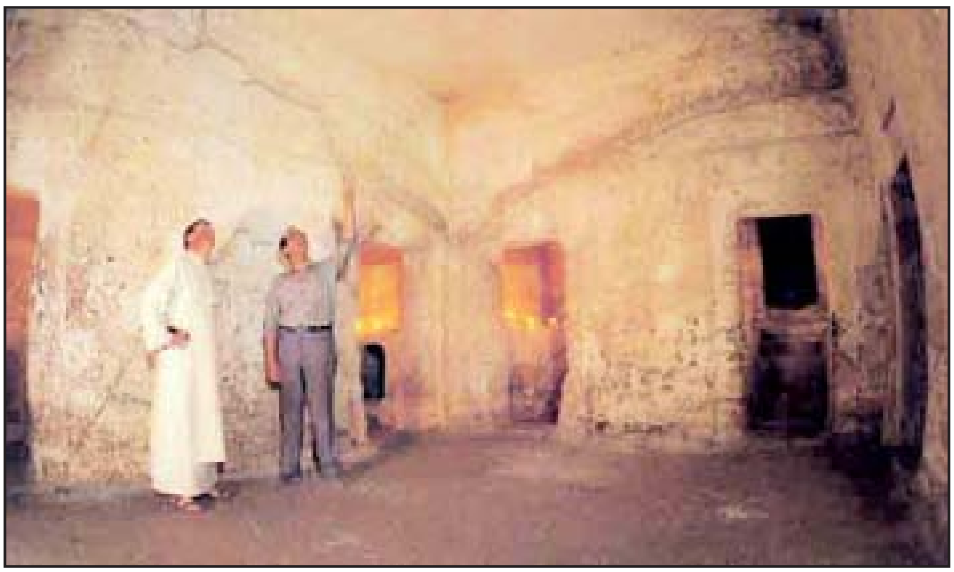
As the arguments based on the exegesis of Gospel texts and on archaeology began to be recognized as fallacious, even to those who wanted to believe in the Garden Tomb, the argument based on the inscriptions gained in importance. It would be futile to detail all the distortions that piety demanded of facts. The culmination came in a book entitled *Palestine Depicted and Described*, published in 1911. The author, M. G. E. Franklin, claimed to have followed the excavations at the Garden Tomb from the beginning and to have participated in the discovery of the inscriptions: "Two of the slabs contained inscriptions in Greek, one referring to Nonnus and the other to Onesimus 'deacons of the Church of the Resurrection buried near my [sic] Lord.' These stones have now been placed in the land adjoining the church of St. Stephen, where they are shown to Catholic pilgrims. But they are not in their original place, since I noted their transfer."[10]

At this point farce had given way to fraud, and men of good will threw up their hands and turned to other things. The Nonnus inscription, so variously exploited in the service of a vain hope, stands today in the atrium of St. Étienne's monastery three yards from where it was discovered. Its place in the pavement has been taken by a metal plate that can be lifted with ease. In the tomb beneath rest the bones of Nonnus undisturbed by the storm that raged about his epitaph.

# Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple

***A few hundred yards from Damascus Gate and over the wall from the Garden Tomb, magnificent burial cave lies beneath a Dominican monastery.***

## By Gabriel Barkay and Amos Kloner



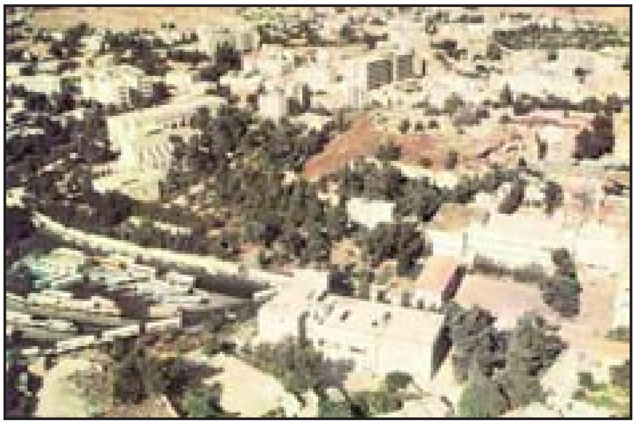
*Richard Nowitz*

Damascus Gate, the most important entrance to Jerusalem's Old City, fairly bustles with activity inside and out. Arab men in their robes and keffiyehs; Arab women in long embroidered dresses; priests from a dozen different Christian denominations, Eastern and Western, each with his distinctive gown or collar or hat; Orthodox Jews with long beards and black garb walking to the Western Wall of the Temple Mount to pray; young Israelis; and tourists from everywhere—all mingle and brush shoulders. As a dozen languages blend together, honking taxis and braying mules create a cacophony. Odors typical of Near Eastern bazaars—sweet Turkish coffee, roasted nuts, spices and sheepskin—float through the air.

As its name implies, Damascus Gate opens onto the road to Damascus, 140 miles away. In Hebrew, the gate is called Sha-ar Shechem, Shechem Gate, because the road also leads to Shechem, modern Nablus, on the way to Damascus.

Within a block of the gate, on the right going north, is a large, walled compound—the monastery of the Dominican fathers. Within its walls is not only the Monastery of St. Étienne (St. Stephen), but also the famous École Biblique et Archéologique Française, or the French School, as it is sometimes called.

Walking through the small opening in the massive monastery wall is like passing from one world into another. Noise and bustle are left behind and serenity and calm take their place. In the spacious gardens of the monastery, shaded by tall old pines, one hears only the sound of birds or the turning of an ancient folio page in



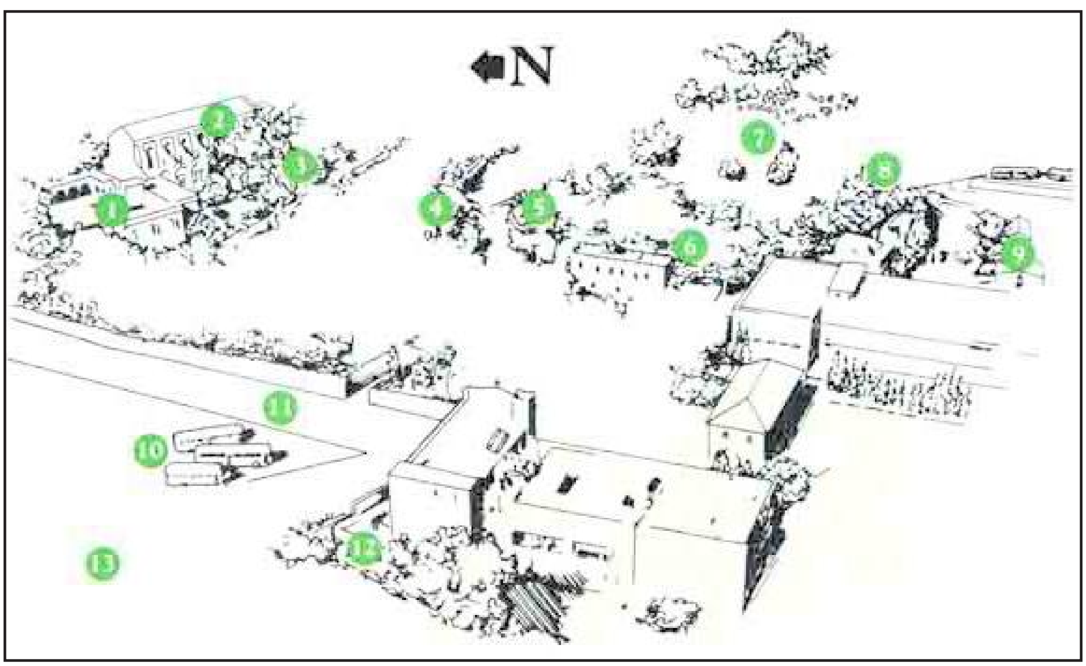
Concealed by modern Jerusalem, an ancient cemetery within these rocky hills covers much of the area of this aerial photo.

the school's world-renowned library. White-robed priests move silently amid columned porticos. The atmosphere is holy.

Although one is hardly aware of it as one enters the Monastery of St. Étienne today, the monastery compound sits on the slope of a hill. This hill is separated from the walled Old City to the south by Nablus (Shechem) Road, which runs along the outside of the wall. Toward the end of the last century, this hill was identified by the famous English general Charles George Gordon as Golgotha, the site of Jesus' crucifixion. Today, the southern face of the hill is obscured by the East Jerusalem bus station. A Moslem cemetery occupies the summit. North of the bus station is the so-called Garden Tomb where, some have proposed, Jesus was buried. Still further north, the Monastery of St. Étienne adjoins the Garden Tomb.

In one of St. Étienne's gardens a flight of stairs leads down to the monastery's underground burial chapel. Here are buried some of the legendary figures in the history of Biblical scholarship, ancient geography and Jerusalem archaeology—Roland Guerin de Vaux, Louis Hugues Vincent, Felix M. Abel, Raphael Savignac, Charles Coüasnon—all Dominican priests. Their names reverberate in the hushed burial chapel as scant sunlight reveals the inscribed plaques on the wall behind which their mortal remains lie.

The burial chapel is, in fact, directly in front of another burial cave complex, a very ancient one. In




All the tombs named on the locator drawing are part of the same complex of burial caves, hewn from the bedrock in the the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., when the First Temple stood about a half mile to the south, on the Temple Mount. (1) École Biblique; (2) St. Étienne Church; (3) entrance to St. Étienne Cave Complex 2; (4) entrance to St. Étienne Cave Complex 1; (5)entrance to Garden Tomb; (6) Garden Tomb compound; (7) Moslem cemetery; (8) Skull Rock (Golgotha); (9) old East Jerusalem bus terminal; (10) new east Jerusalem bus terminal; (11) Nablus Road (the road to Damascus); (12) White Sisters Convent burial cave; (13) Conder's Cave.

1885, shortly after the monastery was established here because it was the traditional site of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, this burial cave complex was excavated by the Dominican fathers. They found another burial cave complex near a church they were building in memory of St. Stephen. The cave complex behind the fathers' burial chapel is called Cave Complex 1; the other, Cave Complex 2.

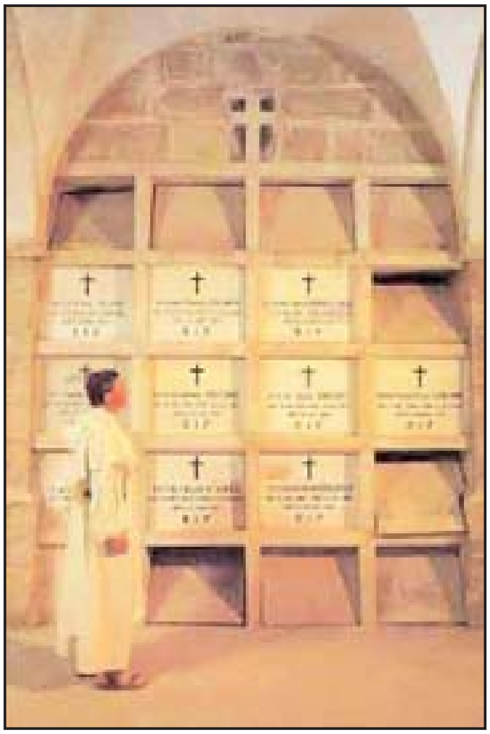
The results of these 19th century excavations were published by Roland de Vaux (1885), Marie Joseph Lagrange (1894) and Louis-Hugues Vincent (1926), who dated the burial caves to the Second Temple period (first century B.C. to first century A.D.) or the Roman period (first to third centuries A.D.). No special importance was attributed to the caves.

However, during the last 100 years, and especially recently, we have learned an enormous amount about burial caves and customs in different Biblical periods. On the basis of this scholarship, even a cursory examination of the tomb complexes at St. Étienne cast grave doubt on Lagrange and Vincent's dating. It therefore seemed appropriate to undertake a thorough reinvestigation of these burial caves. In 1973, the authors, with the kind permission of Père Pierre Benoit, then head of the École Biblique, initiated a detailed survey of these caves (see the sidebar "How We Happened to Re-Explore the Caves at St. Étienne").

The entrance to Cave Complex 1 is behind the altar of the modern burial chapel. The first room of the ancient burial cave is the entrance chamber. This entrance chamber measures about 14 feet by 17 feet. The ceiling is about ten feet high. These measurements are significant, and we will return to them later (see the sidebar "Measurements in the Bible—Evidence at St. Étienne for the Length of the Cubit and the Reed").

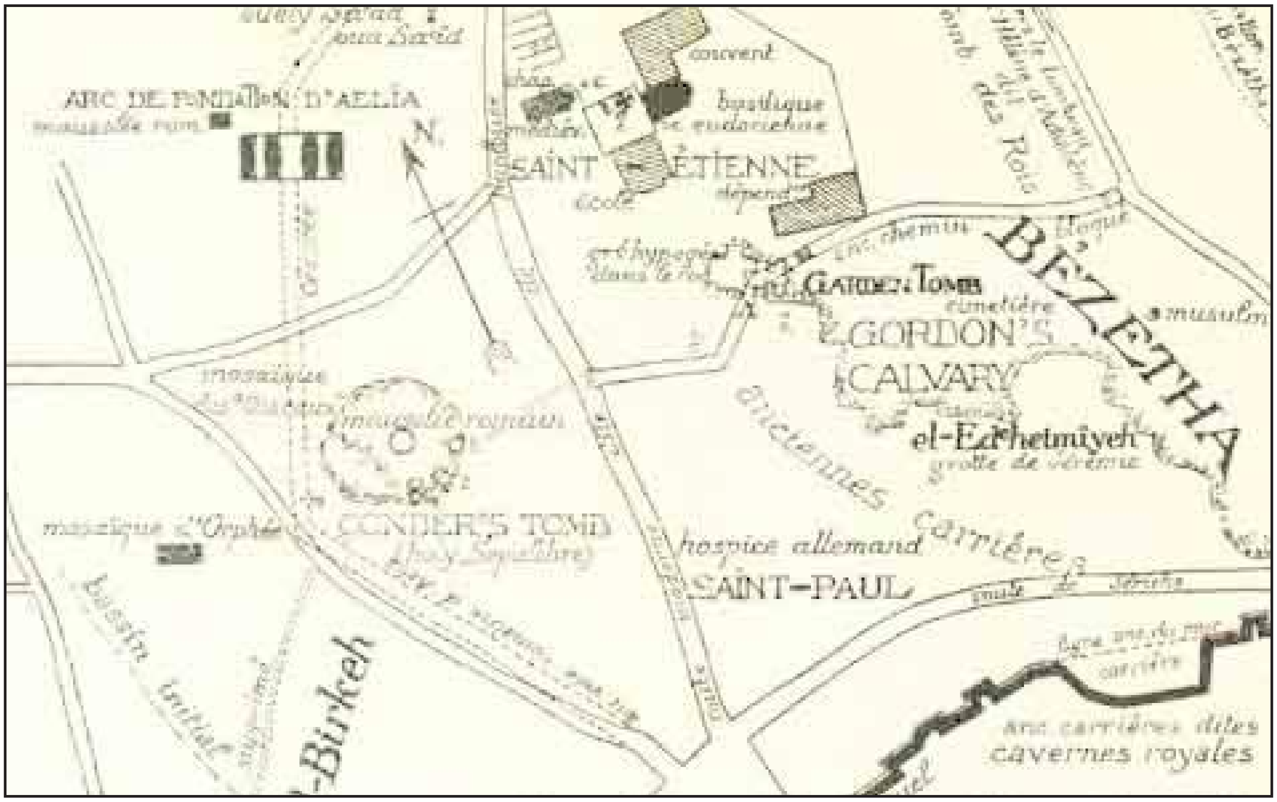
Inside the doorway to the entrance chamber is a step that forms an additional threshold. In this rock-hewn step there are carved two three-quarter-circle sockets; these sockets originally held the hinges of a double door that controlled access to the burial cave. Steps like this one, with similar sockets, are known from various Iron Age II (eighth to seventh century B.C.) structures. They are usually found at palace throne room entrances—for example, at Arslan-Tash, at Zincirli (ancient Samal) and Tell Halaf in northern Syria; at Nimrud (Biblical Calah) (Genesis 10:11–12), and Nineveh in Assyria, and at Megiddo and Gezer in Israel. The implication, as we shall see again and again, is that this impressive cave complex dates to the First Temple period (eighth or seventh century B.C.), rather than to the Second Temple period (first century B.C. to first century A.D.).

A careful examination of the walls of the entrance chamber reveals that they are decorated with shallow sunken panels, rectangular in shape, that were hewn into the rock faces of the walls. These rectangular panels are probably stone copies of wooden panels that typically covered the walls of Judean palaces during the Israelite period. Until this discovery, archaeologists had not seen any Israelite or Judean palace (or other building) of this period with a preserved superstructure of walls. At best, they had found only wall stubs. The walls of this St. Étienne burial cave can therefore teach us a great deal about how palace walls were decorated in Iron Age II. Such decoration was probably used on the walls of Solomon's



Richard Nowitz

Dominican priests buried in the underground chapel of St. Étienne's Church include many of the great figures in the history of scientific research in the Holy Land: Louis-Hugues Vincent, who excavated the ancient burial caves next to this chapel in the late 19th century, Roland de Vaux, excavator of Qumran and Tirzah (Tell el-Farah), Raphael Savignac, known for his studies in Arabia and the Negev, and Felix M. Abel, the founder of modern geographical study of the Holy Land.




Revue Biblique

In 1925, the Revue Biblique published this map of Jerusalem, showing the monastery of St. Étienne and the Garden Tomb. Another cave tomb on this map was identified as the Holy Sepulchre in 1881 by Claude Conder, but is no longer a contender.

Temple. In 1 Kings 6:9, we read that after Solomon finished building the Temple, he covered the walls with “beams and planks of cedar.” This is how the New Jewish Publication Society translation renders the passage, but a note to the verse tells us that the “meaning of the Hebrew [is] uncertain.” The Hebrew word translated as “beams” is *gebim*; for “planks” the word is *sderot*. *Gebim* probably refers to the sunken panels, and *sderot* to the raised strips between the panels. Who would have thought that an examination of the stone walls of a burial chamber would elucidate a hitherto obscure Biblical passage and would tell us how the walls in Solomon’s Temple might have been decorated.

Incidentally, this method of wall decoration continued to be used to the end of the Divided Monarchy (586 B.C.). Jeremiah prophesies against Jehoikim, king of Judah (italics added):

“Ha! he who builds his house with unfairness
And his upper chambers with injustice,
Who makes his fellowman work without pay
And does not give him his wages,
Who thinks: I will build me a vast palace
With spacious upper chambers,
Provided with windows,
*Paneled in cedar*,
Painted with vermilion!
Do you think you are more a king
Because you compete in cedar?”
(Jeremiah 22:13–15).

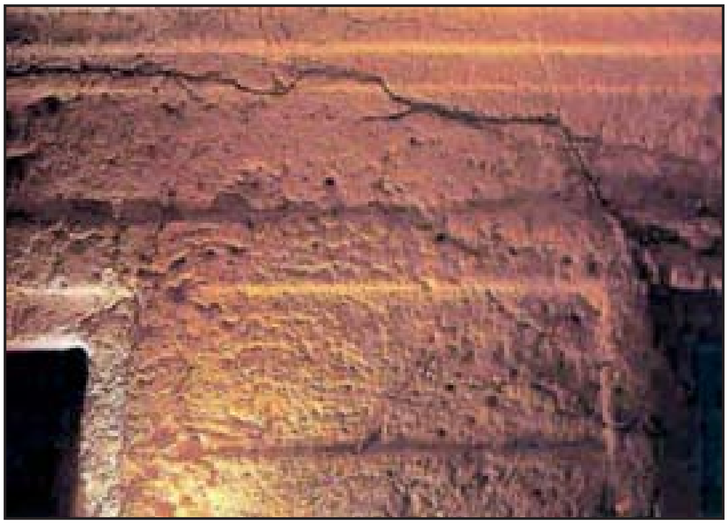
It seems that the same wall decoration was being used in Jeremiah's time.

Another point of interest in the entrance chamber is the cornice that decorates the top of the walls where they meet the ceiling. The cornice is carved from the rock, as is everything else in the burial cave. It consists of two strips running horizontally, the upper of which protrudes more than the lower. Cornices like this one have been found in other Iron Age burial caves. One such burial cave, known as the Tomb of the Royal Steward, was hewn for one of the highest ranking officials in the kingdom of Judah in the late eighth or seventh century B.C. Located in Silwan Village, the tomb lies across the valley from that part of Jerusalem called the City of David. An inscription deciphered by Professor Nahman Avigad identifies the Tomb of the Royal Steward[a] and allows it to be securely dated to the period of the Judean monarchy. Other tombs with this same type of cornice were excavated at the site called the "Shoulder of Hinnom" overlooking the Hinnom Valley, next to St. Andrew's church in the western necropolis of Biblical Jerusalem.

Another tomb with a similar cornice was found south west of Jerusalem in Khirbet Beit Lei, near Amatziah. An ancient Hebrew inscription in this tomb, published by its excavator Joseph Naveh, allows us to date the tomb with confidence to the Iron Age. Thus the St. Étienne cornice helps establish this cave complex as a First Temple burial tomb.

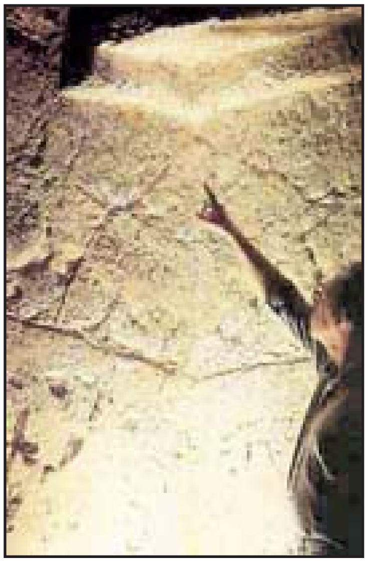
The entrance chamber of the St. Étienne burial cave, like its other rooms, has been carved with exceptional skill and care. This tomb complex was obviously the final resting place of an important and wealthy family. The walls are dressed so smoothly that we could not see any evidence of tooling. In Second Temple period tombs, by contrast, archaeologists easily recognize the work of metal-toothed chisels, or "claws," which were used to finish the walls. The finely finished walls provide one more indication that the St. Étienne tombs must be dated to the First Temple period, rather than to the Second Temple period. Indeed, carefully dressed, smooth surfaces, especially on ashlar masonry, are typical of royal architecture in both the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah during the Iron Age.

The original 1885 excavation report includes a curious item. The excavators state that they found a metal box in a pit in the rear part of the entrance chamber. It was decorated with garlands and human figures in relief. Unfortunately, we could not



*Richard Nowitz*

Sunken panel. Carved into a stone wall of the Cave Complex 1 entrance chamber, panels, doorway frames and a double cornice running along the top of the wall display the stonemasons' skill. Chisel marks are invisible, a strong indication that this tomb was carved in the First Temple period. During the Second Temple period, by contrast, rock surfaces were dressed with chisels that left clear "comb" marks.



*Ricahrd Nowitz*

An angular cornice decorating a chamber in St. Étienne's Cave Complex 2 is examined by co-author Barkay. This decoration and double cornices such as the one in Cave Complex 1 closely resemble the cornice on the ceiling of the royal burial cave at Van, in Urartu (modern Turkey). For more information, see photograph of Van.



Richard Nowitz

Double cornices in Cave Complex 1 closely resemble the cornice on the ceiling of the royal burial cave at Van, in Urartu (modern Turkey). For more information, see photograph of Van.



Hedy Yehudaiov

The cornice on the ceiling of the royal burial cave at Van, in Urartu (modern Turkey), closely resembles decorations found at St. Étienne (see photographs of cornices from Cave Complex 1 and Cave Complex 2). Although much bigger than the St. Étienne tomb, the caves at Van date to the same period, the eighth century B.C., and follow the same basic plan of burial chambers leading off a central entrance chamber.

examine this box—it has disappeared from the archaeological collection of the Dominican fathers. According to the excavation report, the box contained animal and bird bones. It is too bad this box and its contents have been lost because from it we might have learned a great deal about burial customs, as well as about art of the period. The box may even have contained a foundation deposit buried in the entrance chamber when it was originally hewn.

Leading off the entrance chamber are six additional rooms or chambers, two off of each wall except the entrance wall. This plan—a central entrance chamber with burial chambers around it—is found in several First Temple period burial caves in the kingdom of Judah. The Amatziah burial cave already mentioned was hewn on this plan. So was a burial cave at Khirbet el Kôm, west of Hebron, where Hebrew inscriptions scratched on the wall enabled the excavator, William G. Dever, to date it unequivocally.

Much to our surprise, in the course of our research we found that this same plan, and the same style of cornice we previously described, appears in the royal burial caves of the kingdom of Urartu (Biblical Ararat) at Van in Turkish Armenia. Both the burial halls and the cornice are much larger in the Urartu caves, but the plan of the halls and the design of the cornice are the same.

The rectangular entrances to the six chambers leading off the entrance chamber are decorated with a shallow frame carved from the rock. Each entrance is nearly six feet high, and with two exceptions, all the burial chambers are arranged in the same way. On the two side walls and on the wall opposite the entrance, burial benches have been hewn from the rock. The three burial benches form a kind of upside down Π (a Greek letter *pi* or the Hebrew letter *het*). During the First Temple period, bodies were placed on these burial benches.

Each burial bench has a low parapet about two inches high around its outer edge, carved from the rock, presumably to prevent the body and burial gifts from rolling off the bench. Headrests at the ends of the burial benches, also carved from the rock, indicate how the bodies were placed. The headrests are shaped like horseshoes. The two ends of each horseshoe are rounded and the central part is lower and flatter than the ends. The head of the deceased rested in the horseshoe, and the neck came through the opening.

There are four headrests carved on the three burial benches in each burial chamber—two headrests at either end of the burial bench opposite the entrance and one on each of the side burial benches. Thus, four bodies could be accommodated on the three burial benches—two on the back bench and one on each side. The headrests on the side benches were placed on ends closest to the entrance and opened toward the back of the chamber.

The headrests in the other burial cave complex at St. Étienne, Cave Complex 2, are slightly different. They are heav-

ier and higher, with a curve at the two ends, reminding us of the wig typically worn by the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

Interestingly enough, Hathor appears on the famous eighth-century B.C. carved ivories from the palace at Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Headrests similar to those found at St. Étienne are also known from the necropolis of the nobles in Silwan Village and in the western cemetery of Jerusalem in the Hinhom Valley as well as at the burial caves of Khirbet el Kóm, and at Sovah, west of Jerusalem.[b] All date to the First Temple period. No doubt the Jerusalem tombs were the prototype; the country folk at places like Khirbet el Kóm were trying to emulate the elaborate, elegant, beautifully carved burial caves that characterized sophisticated artistic development in the royal center of Jerusalem.

As our readers will no doubt have guessed by this time, burial benches arranged around the sides of the room are typical of First Temple period tombs. Second Temple burials, on the other hand, are entirely different. In the later period, burial niches (called *kokhim*; singular, *kokh*) rather than benches, were carved perpendicularly into the rock. In addition, the Second Temple period burial caves sometimes had shelves carved into the walls with ceilings shaped like arches; these are called *arcosolia* (singular, *arcosolium*).

First Temple period or Iron Age rock-hewn tomb chambers with burial benches on three sides are very widely distributed in Judah. They have been found at Beth Shemesh, Lachish, Mitzpah, Motza and elsewhere. There can thus be no doubt that the burial complex at St. Étienne dates to the First Temple period.

In each of the burial chambers at St. Étienne, a rectangular opening was cut into the side of the right-hand burial bench. This opening leads to an irregular, hollowed out area under the burial bench. This hollowed out area extends into the next room, under the left-hand burial bench of that room, so that the space under both side benches is utilized.

These hollowed out areas are repositories. When the burial benches were needed for the next generation, the bones and burial gifts of the earlier generation were simply scooped up from the burial benches and placed in the repository under the bench. These repositories explain the Biblical phrases in which the deceased are "gathered unto their fathers" (e.g., Judges 2:10; 2 Kings 22:20) or "buried with his fathers" (e.g., 2 Kings 8:24) or "slept with his fathers" (e.g., 2 Kings 13:13). The bones of each generation were literally collected and added to the pile of bones of the forefathers. Bones have even been found in the repositories at St. Étienne, although we cannot tell whether they are from the original burials or from later burials, since the caves were reused in the Byzantine period (fifth and sixth centuries A.D.), more than a thousand years after their original use.

One room in Cave Complex 1 at St. Étienne is special. It is the right-hand room on the wall opposite the entrance to the entrance chamber. There are only two burial benches in it, one on either side of the room. These burial benches are larger than usual, and each has two headrests, one on either end, as if each burial bench was intended for a couple. The ceiling of this chamber is higher



Richard Nowitz

Stone headrests. On the burial benches of the St. Étienne cave tombs, these horseshoe-shapes cradled the heads of the deceased. These thin, simple "u" shaped headrests are from Cave Complex 1. See photograph of headrests from Cave Complex 2.



Richard Nowitz

Stone headrests. On the burial benches of the St. Étienne cave tombs, these horseshoe-shapes cradled the heads of the deceased. Unlike the thin, simple "u" shaped headrests in Cave Complex 1 (see photograph), these, in Cave Complex 2, are slightly higher and thicker and curve out at the ends. This gives them the look of the wig typically worn by the Egyptian goddess Hathor, an indication of the cultural influence of Egypt in ancient Israel.

than the other rooms and certain decorative elements recall the elegance of the entrance chamber: a double cornice was carved at the top of the wall, and sunken panels were carved into the wall leading from this chamber to another behind it.

Between the two burial benches of this special room, a flight of steps leads up to the innermost chamber of the entire burial complex. This innermost chamber has no burial benches, but three roughly hewn sarcophagi are cut from the rock in the same arrangement as the burial benches in the other burial chambers. The same sunken panels used on the walls of the entrance chamber appear on the outer faces of the sarcophagi. Narrow shelves protruding from the walls just above the sarcophagi were intended as supports for stone slabs that once covered the sarcophagi. In this innermost chamber, there is no repository for bones. The bodies of the honored dead placed in these sarcophagi were buried here for the first and the last time. Their bones were not "collected" in later generations. Like the other "special" chambers of the complex, this innermost chamber also has a double cornice at the top of the walls.

If we look at the plan of the burial cave complex, we can easily see that the entire complex was organized so that people would walk directly into the innermost chamber, which was no doubt the most important room of the burial cave. We assume that the sarcophagi in this room held the bodies of the fathers or founders of the family. The rest of the immediate family members were buried in the adjacent rooms.

Another special room in this cave complex was the first room on the right after entering the entrance chamber. While it is larger and more elaborate than the other rooms, it does not include any burial installations—neither benches, sarcophagi, nor repositories. We assume that this room was used either for some kind of ceremony or as a room in which bodies were prepared for burial. In 2 Chronicles 16:14 we are told that when King Asa of Judah died, his body was laid in a resting place filled with expertly blended spices and perfumes. Perhaps this was the purpose for which this empty room at St. Étienne was used. It is interesting that in Cave Complex 2, a similar room was also found to the right of the doorway to the entrance chamber.

We now know that the two cave complexes at St. Étienne were part of a much larger necropolis north of Jerusalem in the First Temple period. Just south of the St. Étienne tombs is the Garden Tomb, which can now also be dated to the First Temple period (see "The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?" in this issue). South of the Garden Tomb there were two other burial caves published by Amihai Mazar dating to the First Temple period.

What accounts for the location of this necropolis north of the city? In 1970, Professor Nahman Avigad uncovered part of the massive, 23-foot-thick, wall that bounded Jerusalem on the north in the late eighth century B.C. Today this wall can be seen in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, far south of the northern necropolis we have been discussing. The Christian Quarter and the Moslem Quarter of the Old City lie north of this ancient wall and south of the northern necropolis. What was in this area in the eighth century B.C.? The words of the prophet Jeremiah suggest the answer; in the future, he says, a rebuilt city would include the extramural suburbs like Gareb Hill and Goah (Jeremiah 31:38–39). The prophet may well be describing the northern suburbs of Jerusalem, located outside the wall of the city before the Babylonian destruction in the early sixth century B.C.

During the eighth and seventh centuries, the population of Jerusalem expanded tremendously.[c] This is suggested by the Biblical text, and it has been confirmed archaeologically. The area north of the walled city was the proposed direction of expansion. With this increase in population, more burial grounds were needed. To the burial areas west of the city (such as the Shoulder of Hinnom)[d] and east of the City of David (in what is now the village of Silwan) we may now add the northern necropolis in the area north of the northern suburbs.

The two burial cave complexes at St. Étienne are the most elaborate and the most spacious First Temple period burial caves known to us in all Judah. Each covers approximately 10,000 square feet. We have no information whatever about the appearance of the tombs of the kings of the House of David. It may well be that the royal tombs closely resembled the burial cave complexes at St. Étienne, designed to hold the founder of the family and generations thereafter.

The burial caves at St. Étienne have enriched our knowledge of Jerusalem, provided us with an example of elegant, wealthy tomb complexes of the First Temple period, taught us about burial customs of the times, and even instructed us about the masonry and decoration of royal palaces, the use and length of cubits and reeds and something about the topography of Jerusalem. Surely this is adequate for the moment.

# All in the Family

*Identifying Jesus' relatives*

## By Richard J. Bauckham



Teodoro Vidal Collection, National Museum of American Art/ Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC/Art Resource, NY

Jesus' family is arrayed on the tips of the fingers of this 10-inch-tall Puerto Rican carving known as *La Mano Poderosa*, or *The All Powerful Hand* (c. 1900). From thumb to pinkie, the minute figures depict Jesus, Mary, Joseph and Mary's parents Anne and Joachim. The red gash across the palm represents the wounds of the crucified Jesus. Dangling from the thumb are two small metal cutouts in the shape of a human leg and chest; they were probably hung here in gratitude by the owner of the carving when prayers to heal these body parts were answered.

The names of Joseph, Mary and Jesus are, of course, well attested in the New Testament. Anne and Joachim appear first in a highly fanciful account of Mary's childhood from about 150 C.E. There's very little chance that their names are authentic. So who did belong to Jesus' family? Poring over the pages of the New Testament and the earliest histories of the Church, Richard Bauckham has begun to reconstruct Jesus' family tree. He has not only identified the names of Jesus' brothers and possibly his sisters, an aunt, an uncle, a cousin, and several grand-nephews, but he has also determined the key role they played in the development of the early Church.

Teaching at the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus amazes his fellow congregants. "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary?" his astonished listeners ask. "And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?" (Matthew 13:55–56). The story of Mary and Joseph is, of course, known by everyone. But who are these brothers and sisters of Jesus?

Throughout the New Testament and other early Christian literature, we find references—often mere hints—to Jesus' siblings and cousins. How reliable are these obscure accounts? How much can they tell us about Jesus' extended family?

Various traditions, as we shall see, have understood these siblings differently: as half siblings, as step siblings or as more distant relatives. But little has been said about the role these people once played in the early Church. By reading the New Testament and early Christian literature closely, however, we can begin to piece together a portrait of some of Jesus' closest relatives. Their story, as we shall see, is not just a family history, but an account of the earliest




Germanisches National Museum, Nürnberg, Germany

"Where did this man get this wisdom?" (Matthew 13:54) the crowd gasps when Jesus unfurls a scroll and begins to preach in the synagogue of Nazareth. Their astonishment is apparent on their faces in this illumination from the Codex Aureus of Echternach, made for the Holy Roman Emperor Henry III in about 1055. The congregation declares it knows Jesus well: "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us?" (Matthew 13:55–56).

Though exegetes have long disputed what the terms "brothers" and "sisters" might mean here (are they half or step siblings or even cousins?), this gospel passage indicates that these siblings were clearly well-known members of Jesus' inner family circle.

days of the Christian Church, which Jesus' family helped develop—both within Palestine and perhaps also further afield. Ancient sources allow us to trace the family's continued leadership among Jewish Christians until at least the early second century.

Matthew and Mark both list four brothers of Jesus, with slight variations: Matthew 13:55 names "James and Joseph and Simon and Judas," whereas Mark 6:3 gives "James and Joses and Judas and Simon." Assuming the brothers are listed in age order, James is the oldest. Joseph comes next. (The name Joses, which Mark gives to the second brother, was a common abbreviation for Joseph. No doubt Joses was called this to distinguish him from his father.) Since Matthew and Mark differ in the order in which they list Simon and Judas, we cannot be sure who was younger. (In English usage, Judas has been conventionally known as Jude; this form of the name usually appears on the New Testament letter attributed to this brother of Jesus.)

The New Testament does not tell us the names of Jesus' sisters, nor does it mention how many there were. We only know it was more than one, since Matthew refers to "all his sisters," and "all" in Greek refers to two or more. (Mark 6:3 simply mentions "his sisters.") Later Christian literature gives the names Mary and Salome to Jesus' sisters.[1] These names were extremely common among Jewish women in Palestine, but Salome seems not to have been used outside Palestine, in the Jewish Diaspora. This suggests that the tradition of these two names goes back to Palestinian Jewish-Christian tradition, and so may be historically reliable.

Jesus' brothers were evidently known as "the brothers of the Lord" in early Christian circles. This is how Paul describes them in 1 Corinthians 9:5 and Galatians 1:19.

It is clear that the New Testament references to the brothers of Jesus are describing a family relationship. But "brother" need not refer to a full blood brother. Half brother, stepbrother or even more distant family relationships are possible meanings. Whether these scriptural passages are references to blood relatives has been much debated since at least the fourth century, mainly because of the implications for the traditional doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Exegetes have taken three major stances:

(1) Most modern exegetes, including some Roman Catholic scholars, hold that the brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph and Mary, born after Jesus.[2] This is often referred to as the Helvidian view, named for a fourth-century Roman who defended this position. His work is known only through Jerome's exposition—and refutation—of it.

(2) The traditional view of the eastern Orthodox churches is that the brothers and sisters were children of Joseph by a previous marriage and were therefore older than Jesus. This is sometimes called the Epiphanian position, after its supporter Epiphanius, the fourth-century bishop of Salamis, in Cyprus. The idea that the brothers and sisters of Jesus were children of Joseph by a previous marriage is also found in three second-century Christian works (the Protoevangelium of James, the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Peter).[3]

(3) The traditional western Catholic view is that the brothers and sisters were first cousins of Jesus. This is sometimes called the Hieronymian view, after Jerome, the great Christian scholar (d. 420). Although this view still has its supporters, it is the least probable. Its advocates emphasize that the Greek word for brother can be used for blood

relationships more distant than siblings. But the earliest Christian literature seems to regard the brothers as siblings. For example, the second-century historian Hegesippus calls James and Jude "brothers of the Lord," but identifies Simeon the son of Clopas as the "cousin of the Lord," evidently distinguishing between the two relationships.[4]

If the third view is improbable, it is not easy to decide between the other two views. But whether Jesus' brothers and sisters were half siblings or stepbrothers and stepsisters, children of Joseph by a previous marriage, we can be sure that they all belonged to the family household of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth. The gospel traditions regularly refer to Jesus' brothers in company with his mother (Matthew 12:46–47, 13:55; Mark 3:31–32, 6:3; Luke 8:19–20; John 2:12; Acts 1:14; Gospel of the Nazarenes frag. 2).[a]



*Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY*

The Italian painter Giotto, in this 13th-century fresco from the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy, depicts Joseph and one son leading Mary to safety in Egypt after Jesus' birth. The Gospel of Matthew recounts that "[Joseph] took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt" (Matthew 2:13). But in the apocryphal Pseudo-Gospel of Matthew, Joseph is accompanied by "a boy"—perhaps one of his sons (compare with image of Kahrie Cami mosaic).

To learn more of Jesus' collateral relatives, we must turn to the writer Hegesippus, who lived in Palestine in the mid-second century and recorded some local traditions concerning Jesus and his relatives. Except for a few fragments, his work unfortunately has not survived. What we know of his writings comes mostly from quotations by the famous third- to fourth-century Church historian Eusebius. Although the traditions in Hegesippus tend to be legendary, the legends are attached to historical figures who were revered as Christian leaders and martyrs in the memory of the Jewish-Christian communities of Palestine. Though the tales about them might not always ring true, we can be sure that these people did exist and were related to Jesus in the way Hegesippus claims.

According to Hegesippus, Jesus' putative father, Joseph, had a brother named Clopas.[5] The name Clopas is extremely rare. Only two other certain occurrences of it are known, and only one of these is in the New Testament.[6] According to John 19:25, three women stood by the cross while the Roman soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothes: Jesus' mother Mary, Mary Magdalene and a woman named "Mary of Clopas."[b] Clopas is not a place-name but rather the name of this Mary's husband; the phrase could be worded "Mary belonging to Clopas." Since Clopas is such a rare name, it probably refers to Joseph's brother, Jesus' uncle, as referred to by Hegesippus. Apparently an aunt of Jesus, as well as his mother, were among those Galilean women who accompanied him on his last journey to Jerusalem and witnessed the crucifixion.

According to the Gospel of Luke, after the discovery of the empty tomb on the first Easter, two of Jesus' disciples walked to Emmaus, a village about 7 miles north of Jerusalem. On the way, Jesus appeared to them. One of the two is identified as Cleopas (Luke 24:18). This Greek name is not the same name as the Semitic name Clopas, but it was common for Palestinian Jews at this period to be known by both a Semitic name and a similar sounding Greek name.



Alinari/Art Resource, NY

Counting heads. Census-takers add the names of Mary (in blue) and Joseph (at far right, in white) to their long scroll, in this mosaic from the Istanbul church Kahrie Cami (compare with image of Scrovegni Chapel fresco). In the days of Emperor Augustus, the Gospel of Luke records, a decree went out "that all the world should be registered." So Joseph "went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house of David. He went to be registered with Mary" (Luke 2:1–5).

Mary may not have been Joseph's only traveling companion, however, as is reflected in the Byzantine mosaic: Behind Joseph a cluster of boys—Jesus' brothers—patiently wait for their parents to finish their business. Although Luke makes no mention of the boys' presence at this event, they do appear in a late-second-century version of the story from the Protoevangelium of James, a gospel book that did not make it into the New Testament despite its popularity in ancient times. According to Proto-James, when Joseph heard of the census, he immediately declared: "I shall enroll my sons, but what shall I do with [Mary]?"

Thus, for example, the Greek name Simon was very commonly used as the equivalent of the Hebrew Simeon, and either name could be used for the same individual. It is quite possible that Joseph's brother Clopas also used the Greek name Cleopas and that he was in Jerusalem with his wife at the time of the crucifixion. If so, it is probably this brother of Joseph that Luke is referring to. His unnamed companion may have been his wife, Mary.

What happened to Jesus' brothers after the crucifixion? Apparently the brothers, who the Gospels indicate were less than enthusiastic about Jesus' activity at earlier points in his ministry (Matthew 13:57; Mark 3:21, 31, 6:4; John 7:5), had come round by the time of his death. They soon became prominent leaders of the early Christian movement.

We know the most about James, who became the leader of the Jerusalem Church. Paul tells us that three years after his own conversion, he went to Jerusalem and visited "James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:19), indicating that he was then already someone of significance in the Jerusalem Church. Later James rose to a position of unique preeminence in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13, 21:18). Peter had left the city (Acts 12:17), and the Twelve had dispersed, and thus no longer formed the Christian leadership in Jerusalem. Apparently, James filled the vacuum.

Later writers called James "bishop" of Jerusalem. The term is anachronistic here, but the title nevertheless fairly accurately describes James's role.

James's influence was by no means confined to Jerusalem, however. The Jerusalem Church was the mother church of all churches, and as such was naturally accorded the same kind of central authority over the Christian movement that Jerusalem and the Temple had long had for the Jewish people. As head of the Jerusalem Church, James occupied a position of unrivaled importance in the early Christian movement. One small indication of this is the fact that although the name James was extremely common, this James could be identified simply by his name with no need for further explanation (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 2:12; Acts 12:17, 15:13, 21:18; James 1:1; Jude 1). Further, he bears the distinction of being the only Christian mentioned by name in a first-century source not written by a Christian: The first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus records James's martyrdom in 62 C.E. at the hands of the high priest Ananus II (son of Annas and brother-in-law to Caiaphas). Ananus had him executed by stoning, probably under the law that prescribed this penalty for someone who entices people to apostasy (Deuteronomy 13:6–11).[7]




Photo by Ritter/Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC

As his enemies watch, James is thrown from the pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple (below). He lives, but not for long. At the foot of the Temple, Jesus' eldest brother is beaten and stoned, and then laid out in his casket. This 13th-century mosaic from the Cathedral of San Marco, in Venice, illustrates the martyrdom of James as recorded by the historian Hegesippus in the second century C.E. According to Hegesippus, the scribes and Pharisees killed James for fear that he would lead the people astray. (Hegesippus does tend to exaggerate, however, claiming, for example, that James prayed so much that his knees became as hard as a camel's.) James's martyrdom is confirmed—only in part and in less detail—by the first-century C.E. Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote that James was stoned to death because he had "transgressed the law."

Despite their differences, both accounts reflect the power James held within the early Christian community: Labeled a pillar of the Church by Paul (Galatians 2:9), James appears throughout the Book of Acts as the leader of the Jerusalem Church following Jesus' death.

While James assumed preeminent leadership in Jerusalem, at the center of the Christian movement, Jesus' other brothers appear to have worked as traveling missionaries. In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul defends the right of himself and the apostle Barnabas to have their wives accompany them on their missionary journeys and to receive food and hospitality from the Christian communities among whom they worked. After all, Paul writes, the "other apostles and the brothers of the Lord" have that right. Apparently, Jesus' brothers were so well known as missionaries that they were the obvious examples for Paul to cite, even when speaking to Christians in Corinth. Since it is unlikely that James was well known for his missionary travels, Paul must be referring primarily to the other brothers: Joses (Joseph), Simon and Jude (Judas).

Paul's passing reference to the brothers reminds us of how very fragmentary our knowledge of the early Christian mission is. But we do have at least one source that corroborates Paul's view of the family as famous missionaries. According to Julius Africanus, a native of Jerusalem who lived in Emmaus in the early third century, the relatives of Jesus were known as the *desposynoi*, a term meaning "those who belong to the master [or sovereign; despoteμs]." Noting that the family had managed to preserve their genealogy when Herod burned the public genealogical records,[c] Julius reports: "From the Jewish villages of Nazareth and Kokhaba,[d] they [Jesus' relatives] traveled around the rest of the land and interpreted the genealogy they had [from the family tradition] and from the Book of Days [that is, Chronicles] as far as they could trace it."[8] Julius, whose writings are known to us in fragments, was probably relying on a written source of Palestinian Jewish-Christian origin. What Julius most likely meant was that members of Jesus' family traveled around the land of Israel preaching the gospel to their fellow Jews. They used a family genealogy (like that in Luke 3:23–38) as a way of explaining the Christian claim that Jesus was the messianic son of David.[9]

This little-noticed reference from Julius Africanus provides us with a rare glimpse of Christianity in Galilee and shows us that not only Jerusalem, but also Nazareth and Kokhaba, where other members of the family were based, were significant centers of early Christianity in Jewish Palestine.

One final point that gives us added confidence in the reliability of what Julius Africanus is telling us: The term *desposynoi* is not found in any other source. Julius even has to explain what it means. It is not a term he would have used had he not found it in his source. It must be the term by which members of the family of Jesus were known in those Palestinian Jewish-Christian circles in which they were revered leaders. Just as it was normal practice in the ancient Near East for members of the royal family to hold high offices in government, so Palestinian Jewish Christians felt it appropriate that Jesus' brothers, cousins and other relatives should hold positions of authority in his Church.



Gift of W. G. Russell Allen/© 2000 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Family dinner? After the Resurrection, Jesus appears to two people traveling along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Although they fail to recognize Jesus, they nevertheless invite him home to dine, and Jesus agrees. Rembrandt's etching "Christ at Emmaus" (1654) depicts the moment when Jesus blesses the bread and gives it to them, and "their eyes were opened, and they recognized him" (Luke 24:31). The Gospel of Luke identifies only one of the people whom Jesus meets on the road to Emmaus—a man with the Greek name Cleopas. According to author Bauckham, in Jesus' cosmopolitan world, people with Semitic names often went by similar sounding Greek names. Jesus' uncle Clopas may well have assumed the name of Cleopas—and therefore may be the man in this scene.

Luke never identifies Cleopas's companion on the road, not even by gender, although most later commentators and artists have portrayed this figure as a man. Rembrandt, however, has identified her as a woman (standing at left). Author Bauckham proposes that the unidentified figure in the gospel story may well have been Mary of Clopas. He suggests that the couple may often have been on the road together, as traveling missionaries for the earliest Church.

Indeed, the term *desposynoi* could well have the sense, more or less, of "members of the royal family." The term suggests that not only "the brothers of the Lord" but also a wider circle of relatives played prominent leadership roles. Jesus' aunt and uncle, Mary and Clopas, may well have been a husband and wife team of traveling missionaries. And if the names of the sisters of Jesus—Mary and Salome—were correctly preserved in tradition, this would imply that they, too, were well-known figures in the early Church.

Julius Africanus speaks only of the travels of the *desposynoi* within Palestine, but their mission may well have extended to parts of the Jewish Diaspora. An indication that the family's influence (especially James's) extended to the eastern church comes from the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, which reflects the gospel traditions of Christianity in the north Mesopotamian area perhaps as early as the late first century. The New Testament itself deals almost exclusively with Christianity's spread westwards from Palestine, but it must have spread just as quickly to the east. For Palestinian Jews, the eastern Diaspora—in Mesopotamia and areas further east (see Acts 2:9)—was just as important as the western Diaspora. In one of the sayings of Jesus found in the Gospel of Thomas (*logion* 12), Jesus tells his disciples that after he has departed they should "go to James the Righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being." Though there is no likelihood that this is an authentic saying of Jesus, it nevertheless reflects the authority attributed to James in north Mesopotamian Christianity, where this text originated, during his own lifetime.

Further evidence of the influence of Jesus' family in the east comes from a medieval chronicle that lists the early bishops of Ctesiphon-Seleucia, a metropolitan center on the Tigris River, in central Mesopotamia. Following the name of the first-century founder of the church, the next three bishops are Abris, who is said to have been "of the family and race of Joseph [the husband of Mary]"; Abraham, "of the kin of James called the brother of the Lord"; and Ya'qub, Abraham's son. While it may seem hazardous to trust such a late source, the medieval chroniclers had access to dependable older sources. Further, claims to descent from the family of Jesus are rare in Christian literature, suggesting that when such a claim is made it should be regarded as credible. Later Christian writers were not in the least prone to inventing legendary descendants of this family or to ascribing such descent to historical persons without warrant. It seems to be a reasonable possibility that members of Jesus' family traveled to the eastern Diaspora, where their descendants became important Christian leaders in the second century.

The leadership role played by Jesus' relatives passed from one family member to another and from one generation to the next.

Following James's martyrdom, Simeon, the son of Clopas and Mary, succeeded his first cousin as "bishop of Jerusalem." As the leader of the Jerusalem Church, Simeon (or Simon, both the Hebrew and Greek versions of the name are found) was doubtless the most important figure in Jewish Christianity for at least 40 years—until he, too, was martyred, during the reign of Trajan (98–117 C.E.).[10] When Luke's first readers read of Cleopas (Luke 24:18) and John's first readers saw the name Mary of Clopas (John 19:25), many of them would no doubt have recognized the parents of their famous contemporary, Simeon.

According to Hegesippus, Simeon was crucified by the Romans for political subversion because he was of a Davidic family and supported the alleged Davidic king, Jesus. While there is much that is legendary in Hegesippus's hagiographical account of Simeon's martyrdom (especially about his torture), the basic facts seem to be historically reliable. They fit well into the period between the two great Jewish revolts (the First Jewish Revolt ended with the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 C.E.; the second lasted from 132 to 135 C.E.), a time when the Roman authorities in Palestine were highly sensitive to the dangers of Jewish political nationalism.

Hegesippus's hagiographical account of the death demonstrates the great reverence with which Simeon was remembered in the years immediately following his death: Simeon, we are told, "bore witness through tortures of many days' duration, so that all, including the governor, marveled exceedingly how an old man of a hundred and twenty years could thus endure." One hundred and twenty years is the biblical limit on human life (Genesis 6:3), which no one after Moses may exceed (Deuteronomy 34:7), but which someone as righteous as Moses might equal.

Hegesippus's account traces the work of Jesus' family into a third generation. The historian relates that, in the late first century, two grandsons of Jesus' brother Jude, called Zoker and James, came under suspicion of the Roman authorities because they were descendants of David.[11] According to Hegesippus, the brothers were brought before the emperor Domitian for trial:

> There still survived of the family of the Lord the grandsons of Jude, his brother after the flesh, as he was called. These they informed against, as being of the family of David; and the 'evocatus' brought them before Domitian Caesar. For he feared the coming of the Christ, as did also Herod. And he asked them if they were of David's line, and they acknowledged it. Then he asked them what possessions they had or what fortune they owned. And they said that between the two of them they had only nine thousand denarii, half belonging to each of them; and this they asserted they had not as money, but only in thirty-nine plethra of land, so valued, from which by their own labor they both paid the taxes and supported themselves.

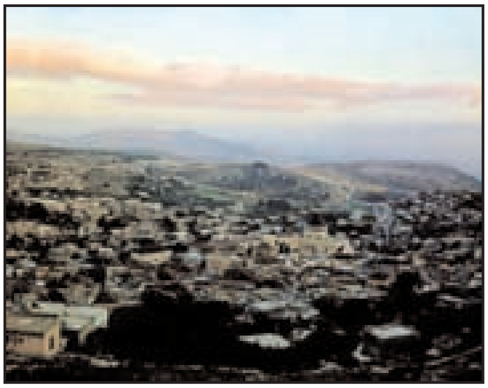
To prove that they were hardworking peasant farmers, these nephews of Jesus displayed their tough bodies and the hardened skin of their hands. They also explained that the kingdom of Christ



*J. Paul Getty Museum*

Three Mary's gather at the foot of the cross in the Gospel of John 19:25: Jesus' mother (in blue), Mary Magdalene (kneeling) and "Mary of Clopas"—that is, Mary, the wife of Clopas (perhaps the turbaned woman to the left of the cross). Clopas was an extremely rare name in Jesus' day, appearing only once in the New Testament and once in the writings of the mid-second-century C.E. historian Hegesippus of Palestine, who gives Clopas as the name of Joseph's brother. If both texts are referring to the same man, then Clopas would be Jesus' uncle and Mary of Clopas, his aunt.

This crucifixion scene was painted in about 1530 by Simon Bening of Bruges to illustrate the prayerbook of Cardinal Albrecht of Brandenburg.



David Harris

Nestled among the Galilee hills lies the modern city of Nazareth. The Church of the Annunciation, with its conical dome, stands just right of center—on the site where tradition claims the archangel Gabriel appeared to Mary.



Zev Radovan

The modern basilica is built above Crusader, Byzantine and early Christian remains—including a small cave (shown here, compare with image of the Church of the Annunciation) dedicated, according to local legend, to a gardener named Conon, who was martyred in Asia Minor in the mid-third century C.E. Brought before court authorities, Conon declared: "I am of the city of Nazareth in Galilee, I am of the family of Christ, whose worship I have inherited from my ancestors." Later, a leader of the Jerusalem Church who shared Conon's name commissioned the cave chapel to honor this distant relative of Jesus.

was not an earthly one (and so, Hegesippus implies, not a kingdom whose supporters would rebel against the empire) but one that would come at the end of history. Having been convinced that they were harmless and despising them as mere peasants, Domitian released them and ordered the persecution of Christians to cease.

While the account of the trial is historically improbable and has a strong apologetic thrust (it tries to show that Jewish Christianity is not a politically dangerous movement), it is at least a legend about real historical persons.[12]

With this legend, however, our trail ends. After the brothers Zoker and James, the family of Jesus fades into obscurity.[13]

Or does it?

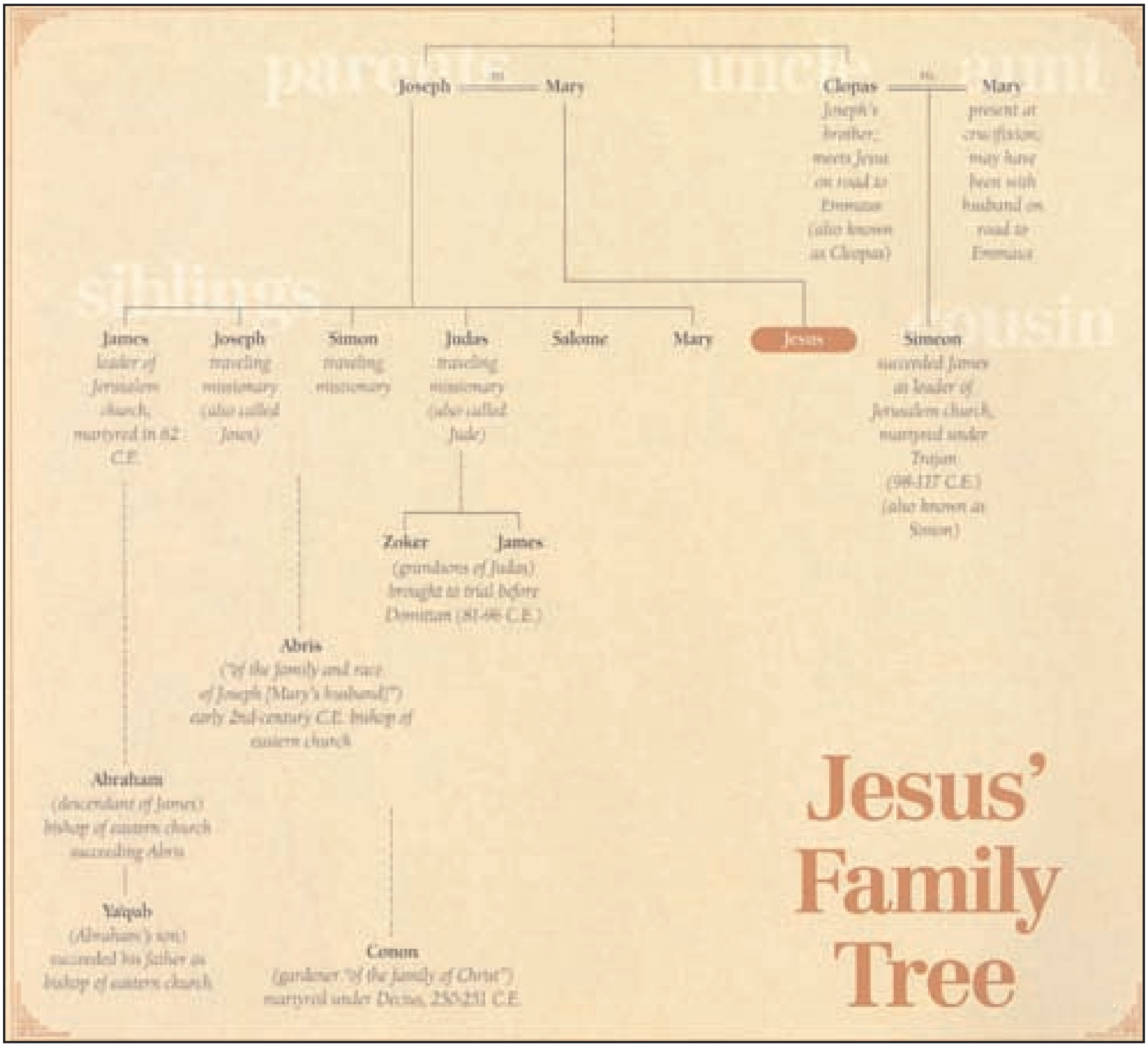
Today, visitors to Nazareth are ushered through a damp cave beneath the Church of the Annunciation. The cave, they are told, was dedicated in ancient times to the cult of a local martyr named Conon, who died far from his home during the persecution of Christians under Emperor Decius in 250–251 C.E. According to the account of his martyrdom, Conon was employed as a gardener on the imperial estate at Magydos, in Pamphylia, Asia Minor. When court authorities questioned Conon as to his place of origin and ancestry, he replied: "I am of the city of Nazareth in Galilee, I am of the family of Christ, whose worship I have inherited from my ancestors."

Is this simply a metaphorical reference to Conon's spiritual origins as a Christian? Perhaps—but such claims are extremely rare. It is far more likely that this is a literal claim of descent from the family of Jesus. As such, it is the last we find in the early Christian literature. After Conon, Jesus' family disappears from the record.[14]



Zev Radovan

A mosaic inscription (shown here, compare with image of cave of Conon) outside the cave reads: "Gift of Conon, deacon of Jerusalem."


parents
uncle
aunt
Joseph
m.
Mary
Clopas
m.
Mary
Joseph's brother; meets Jesus on road to Emmaus (also known as Cleopas)
present at crucifixion; may have been with husband on road to Emmaus
siblings
cousin
James
leader of Jerusalem church, martyred in 62 C.E.
Joseph
traveling missionary (also called Joses)
Simon
traveling missionary
Judas
traveling missionary (also called Jude)
Salome
Mary
Jesus
Simeon
succeeded James as leader of Jerusalem church, martyred under Trajan (98-117 C.E.) (also known as Simon)
Zoker
James
(grandsons of Judas) brought to trial before Domitian (81-96 C.E.)
Abris
("of the family and race of Joseph [Mary's husband]") early 2nd-century C.E. bishop of eastern church
Abraham
(descendant of James) bishop of eastern church succeeding Abris
Ya'qub
(Abraham's son) succeeded his father as bishop of eastern church
Conon
(gardener "of the family of Christ") martyred under Decius, 250-251 C.E.
Jesus' Family Tree

# Notes

## What Did Jesus' Tomb Look Like?

a. See Gabriel Barkay, "News from the Field: The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem," **BAR** 09:02.

b. Boaz Zissu, "Odd Tomb Out: Has Jerusalem's Essene Cemetery Been Found?" **BAR** 25:02.

c. Hershel Shanks, "Who Lies Here? Jordan Tombs Match Those at Qumran," **BAR** 25:05.

d. For a discussion of the type of rolling stone that sealed the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed, see Amos Kloner, "Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?" **BAR** 25:05.

e. See Leen Ritmeyer and Kathleen Ritmeyer, "Akeldma—Potter's Field or High Priest's Tomb?" **BAR** 20:06.

1. Andrea M. Berlin, "Power and Its Afterlife, Tombs in Hellenistic Palestine," *Near Eastern Archaeology* (*NEA*), June 2002, p. 145.

2. See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), p. 64.

3. Levy Y. Rahmani, "Jason's Tomb," *Israel Exploration Journal* (*IEJ*) 17, no. 2 (1967), pp. 61-100.

4. See Nahman Avigad, "Aramaic Inscriptions in the Tomb of Jason," *IEJ* 17, no. 2 (1967), pp. 101-111; Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs and Tombs, Part Three," *Biblical Archaeologist,* Summer 1981, p. 45.

5. For a discussion of the differences in the Gospel accounts of this episode, see Byron R. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone, Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), pp. 101-102. Here I focus on the accounts of Mark and Matthew, which are generally considered to be earlier and more accurate than Luke. The differences between Mark and Matthew include that Joseph is described as a member of the council/Sanhedrin (Mark) or as a rich man (Matthew) (these two statements are complementary, not contradictory), and Matthew states explicitly that this was Joseph's family tomb, whereas Mark does not (these statements likewise are complementary, not contradictory). Since rock-cut tombs belonged to families, I believe that Matthew is accurate in this detail.

6. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 19, 83, 90. See for example Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries, What Jewish Burial Practices Reveal about the Beginning of Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University, 2003), p. 101; McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 89; John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), pp. 160-163; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah from Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, volume two (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. 947.

7. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, pp. 90, 105; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, p. 1207; contra Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, pp. 160-161.

8. The exact manner in which the body was affixed to the cross is debated; for two different reconstructions see Vassilios Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence," **BAR**, January/February 1985; Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985), p. 27. Zias and Sekeles note that death resulted from asphyxiation and not from the trauma caused by nailing the body to the cross.

9. As McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, pp. 100-101 notes, contrary to Crossan. Also see Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence"; Rahmani, "Ancient Jerusalem's Funerary Customs," p. 51; Rahmani, *A Catalog of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), p. 131, no. 218. As McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, p. 99, notes: "Dishonorable burial was reserved for those who had been condemned by *the people of Israel*" (McCane's emphasis). Despite this, McCane concurs that Jesus was buried in shame. The prominence of Yohanan's family is indicated by the fact that another ossuary from this tomb was inscribed "Simon, the builder of the Temple," apparently someone who had participated in the reconstruction of the Temple under Herod; see Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence," pp. 47, 50; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah from Gethsemane to the Grave*, p. 1210.

10. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, p. 168; and *The Historical Jesus, The Life of a Mediterranean Peasant* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1991), p. 391.

11. See citations in previous note.

12. Tzaferis, "Crucifixion—the Archaeological Evidence," p. 50; my emphasis. In their reexamination of this skeleton, Zias and Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar," p. 24, found no evidence for amputation, but confirmed that the nail could not be removed from the heel bone because it was bent: "Once the body was removed from the cross, albeit with some difficulty in removing the right leg, the condemned man's family would now find it impossible to remove the bent nail without completely destroying the heel bone" (p. 27).

13. See Joseph Patrich, "Graves and Burial Practices in Talmudic Sources," in Itamar Singer, ed., *Graves and Burial Practices in Israel in the Ancient Period* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1994), pp. 191-192 (in Hebrew). In Rome, too, the poor were buried in simple holes dug into the ground; see Jon Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 148. The corpses of paupers and criminals were disposed of in mass graves; see John Bodel, "Graveyards and Groves, A Study of the *Lex Lucerina*," *American Journal of Ancient History* 11 (1994), p. 38.

14. See Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), pp. 168-175.

15. Konstantinos D. Politis, "The Nabataean Cemetery at Khirbet Qazone," *NEA*, June 1999, p. 128.

16. See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, pp. 1247–1248.

17. Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*, p. 159; also see his *The Historical Jesus*, p. 393.

## Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?

a. On Jerusalem tombs from Jesus' time, see Zvi Greenhut, "Burial Cave of the Caiaphas Family," **BAR** 18:05; and Leen Ritmeyer and Kathleen Ritmeyer, "Akeldama: Potter's Field or High Priest's Tomb?" and Gideon Avni and Zvi Greenhut, "Akeldama: Resting Place of the Rich and Famous," in **BAR** 20:06.

b. The Mishnah is a collection of rabbinic oral teachings written down in about 200 C.E.

c. On the location of Jesus' tomb, see Dan Bahat, "Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" **BAR** 12:03; and Gabriel Barkay, "The Garden Tomb—Was Jesus Buried Here?" **BAR** 12:02.

1. Mishnah, *Oholot* 2.4.

2. Conrad Schick, "Recent Discoveries at the Nicophorieh," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (*PEFQS*) 25 (1892), pp. 115–120; F.M. Séjourne, "Chronique biblique 4, " *Revue biblique 1* (1892), pp. 267–272; R.A.S. Macalister, "The Nicophorieh Tomb," *PEFQS* 33 (1900), pp. 397–402; Louis-Hugues Vincent and A.M. Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Gabalda, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 342–346.

3. Maximilian Cohen (=Kon), *The Tombs of the Kings* (Tel Aviv, 1947) (in Hebrew); Vincent and Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 346–362.

4. Amos Kloner, "A Burial Monument of the Second Temple Period West of the Old City of Jerusalem," *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985), pp. 58–64.

5. Eliezer L. Sukenik, "Verschlusstein mit Inschrift aus einer Grabhöle bei Jerusalem," *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 55 (1932), pp. 124–128; for the plan and section of the upper room, see Nahman Avigad, "The Necropolis," in *Sepher Yerushalayim*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1956), p. 326 (in Hebrew).

6. Macalister, "The Rock-cut Tombs in Wady er-Rababi, Jerusalem," *PEFQS* 34 (1904), item no. 38; Avigad, "Necropolis," p. 346. Round blocking stones from the Second Temple period have also been found outside Jerusalem—at Horvat Midras (Kloner, "Horvat Midras (Kh. Durusiya)", *Israel Exploration Journal* 27:4 [1977], pp. 251–253; and "Horvat Midras," *Qadmoniot* 11:4 [44] [1978], pp. 115–119) and at Giv'at Seled, nearby (Kloner, "A Burial Cave from the Early Roman Period at Giv'at Seled in the Judean Shephela," '*Atiqot* 20 [1991], pp. 159–163), in the Judean Shephelah. In southern Samaria, similar round closing stones were found in Deir ed-Darb, where the rolling stone moved between two walls of rock, and in Khirbet Kurkush (R.M.R. Savignac, "Chronique (Kh. Kurkush et Deir ed-Darb)," *Revue biblique* 19 [1910], pp. 123–124), where stones were of the simpler, smaller type used in the Byzantine period. The burial caves at these latter two sites are from the first to second century C.E., and represent the transition between early Roman and late Roman round blocking stones. Two additional caves with round blocking stones from the same period were discovered and excavated in Heshbon, Transjordan. In one cave in which the stone was found *in situ*, it moved between the natural rock wall inside and a constructed outer wall (D.S. Waterhouse, "Areas E and F," in R.S. Boraas and Siegfried H. Horn, *Heshbon* [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews Univ. Press, 1971], pp. 115–117; Horn, "The 1971 Season of Excavations at Tell Hesban," *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan* [ADAJ] 17 [1972], pp. 21–22, 111, pl. 4). A second cave was sealed with a round stone that moved between two rock walls (Lawrence T. Geraty, "The 1974 Season of Excavations at Tell Hesban," ADAJ 20 [1975], p. 53, pl. 20, 1; and Geraty, "Chronique archéologique: Hesban (Heshbon)," *Revue biblique* 82 [1975], pp. 583–584, pl. 43b). For the Heshbon tombs nos. F1 and G10, which were probably used by the Jews residing there at the time, see also L.A. Mitchel, *Hellenistic and Roman Strata, Hesban* 7 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews Univ. Press, 1992), pp. 61–63.

7. Both the earlier and the later examples of round stones served as models for Jesus' tomb. For example, Felix-Marie Abel, the famous Dominican father who was an expert of Biblical geography, reconstructed Jesus' tomb with a round blocking stone based on two tombs he found at Abu Ghosh, outside Jerusalem. He thought the tombs dated to the Second Temple period, but it has since been shown that they are Byzantine.

8. Cohen, *Tombs of the Kings*; Vincent and Steve, *Jérusalem de l'Ancien Testament*, pp. 346–362.

9. Macalister, "Rock-cut Tombs." See also the recently found burial system in the 'Ezrat Torah neighborhood of Jerusalem (Zvi Greenhut, "Ezrat Torah Quarter: Jerusalem," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 10:1 [1992], pp. 26–27).

10. For recently published arcosolia, see Gideon Avni and Greenhut, *The Akeldama Tombs*, Israel Antiquities Authority Reports (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1996), pp. 1–39; and Kloner, "A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpyot, Jerusalem," '*Atiqot* 29 (1996), pp. 15–16.

11. *Semahot* 13.5, in Dov Zlotnik, *The Tractate "Mourning"*, Yale Judaica Series 18 (New York and London, 1966), p. 84.

12. *Semahot* 10.8, in Zlotnik, *Tractate "Mourning"*, p. 74.

13. Zlotnik, *Tractate "Mourning"*, pp. 11, 57; M. Higger, *Tractate Semahot* (New York, 1931), p. 148 (in Hebrew). In the modern translation of Tractate *Semahot* 8.1, the 30th day is named as the day to visit the tomb, but this reading is found in only one manuscript. The other manuscripts read "three days" (for manuscripts and printed editions of the tractate Mourning, see Zlotnick, *Tractate "Mourning"*, pp. 27–28). This reading is confirmed by various Tannaitic sources; see J.N. Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem, 1948), pp. 469–471 (in Hebrew); Shmuel Safrai, "Home and Family," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, vol. 2, ed. Safrai and M. Stern (Assen/Amsterdam, 1976), pp. 784–785.

14. *Semahot* 8.1, in Safrai, "Home and Family," pp. 784–785.

15. Martin Biddle, "The Tomb of Christ: Sources, Methods and a New Approach," in *Churches Built in Ancient Times*, ed. Kenneth Painter, Society of Antiquaries of London, Occasional Papers 16 (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1994), pp. 111, 118–119.

16. Shimon Gibson and Joan E. Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1994), pp. 61–63; Biddle, "Tomb of Christ," pp. 114–116.

17. Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "The So-Called Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea," in *The Survey of Western Palestine: Jerusalem*, ed. Charles Warren and Claude R. Conder (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1884), pp. 319–333.

## Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?

a. *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme, Aspetti arceologici dalle origini al periodo crociato*. Parts I–III (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1981–1982).

b. In 1960 he was appointed archaeologist for the Latin community on the project; in 1963, for the Greek and Armenian communities as well.

c. *Nefesh* literally means "soul." In rabbinic literature, it also refers to a monument constructed over a grave as a memorial to the deceased. In contemporaneous Greek inscriptions, the equivalent term is stele.

d. An ashlar is a stone carved as a square or polygon in order to fit it into a construction.

e. See Nancy Miller, "Patriarchal Burial Site Explored for First Time in 700 Years," **BAR** 11:03.

f. Moreover, in the reconstruction itself, Wall T 62 C has no function. Wall T 10 G with two angles makes no sense at all.

g. If Corbo intended as his model the Maison Carée in Nîmes, France, or the Temple of Fortuna in Rome, both of which were contemporaneous with Hadrian's temple on the site of the future Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Corbo failed to follow his models. The staircase should not occupy the whole breadth of the structure; behind the six interior columns there should be two additional columns enclosed in two *antae*, arm-like walls that extend from the main walls of the structure; and the lateral columns should not be freestanding, but only half columns attached to the side walls.

h. Especially Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (Palestine Pilgrims Texts Society, Vol. I, 1891), pp. 1–12.

i. See J.-P. B. Ross, "The Evolution of a Church—Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre," **BAR** 02:03.

1. See Magen Broshi, "Recent Excavations in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre," *Qadmoniot*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1977, pp. 30ff (in Hebrew). More recently, see Magen Broshi and Gabriel Barkay, "Excavations in the Chapel of St. Vartan in the Holy Sepulchre," *Israel Exploration Journal* 35, Nos. 1–3 (1985), pp. 108ff.

2. Broshi and Barkay do not mention this layer of arable soil; instead they found an Iron Age II floor of beaten earth above the quarry fill. Based on this floor and the large quantities of Iron Age B pottery found below, in and above this floor, they conclude this area was residential from the late eighth century to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. They date the quarry mainly to the ninth-eighth centuries B.C. before the city expanded into this extramural area in the late eighth century. Corbo contends that this floor cannot be dated to Iron Age II.

3. Conrad Schick, "Notes from Jerusalem," *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*, 1887, pp. 156–170.

4. See also Corbo photographs No. 24, 25 and 204.

## The Garden Tomb: Was Jesus Buried Here?

a. A new analysis of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and its claim to be the site of Jesus' burial will appear in the next issue of **BAR** ("Does the Holy Sepulchre Church Mark the Burial of Jesus?" **BAR** 12:03). In the meantime, see the convincing review of Father Charles Coüasnon's book on the Holy Sepulchre Church, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem* (London Oxford University Press, 1974), by J.-P. B. Ross ("The Evolution of a Church—Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre," **BAR** 02:03).

b. Apparently the first to do so was Otto Thenius, a German scholar, who had already made the suggestion in 1842.

c. Today, the grounds of the Franciscan White Sisters Convent on Nablus Road cover Conder's cave.

d. One of the finds was a conical object of white stone covered with small holes resembling windows. Some scholars identified the stone as having some connection with the worship of Venus. This "Stone of Venus" and some of the other objects Hanauer published were, according to Hanauer, probably manufactured by the excavator Beckholt himself, who carved them as souvenirs for tourists. The remaining objects published by Hanauer were unearthed by Beckholt in a pit he had dug somewhere on the premises of the Garden Tomb.

e. See "A New Generation of Israeli Archaeologists Comes of Age," **BAR** 10:03, and "Bronze Bull Found in Israelite 'High Place' From the Days of the Judges," **BAR** 09:05.

f. The area surrounding the Garden Tomb is within the line of the Third Wall from the Second Temple period though it was built by Herod Agrippa about one decade after the crucifixion and therefore, located as it was inside the city wall, it would not have been a permissible burial area.

g. D. Davis and Amos Kloner, "A Burial Cave of the Late Israelite Period on the Slopes of Mt. Zion," *Qadmoniot* XI, 41 (1978), pp. 16–19 (in Hebrew). It is known as the tomb of Ḥamîohel based on the inscription found on a small seal discovered in the cave.

h. An ossuary is a stone box used to collect bones for secondary burial after the flesh had decayed. This was customary mainly in Jerusalem and its vicinity in the Second Temple period.

i. Because the Garden Tomb cave was refurbished and altered for secondary use during the Byzantine period, it bears none of the other characteristics of Byzantine burial caves. Several such Byzantine caves were discovered in the courtyard of the St. Étienne Monastery near the Garden Tomb, and they all differ from the Garden Tomb cave in plan, character and architectural details.

j. Hanauer also published the "Stone of Venus" I mentioned in the footnote above; Beckholt was accused of manufacturing this object himself.

k. Additional support for this suggestion comes from the Late Iron Age pottery found in other excavations in the vicinity—close to the Damascus Gate in R. W. Hamilton's excavations in the 1930s, and in the German excavations under Saint Paul's Hospice adjoining the Garden Tomb, as well as in additional digs extending up to the line of the Third Wall.

l. In the fifth century A.D., the Empress Eudocia (also spelled Eudoxia) built the great Church of Saint Stephen on the site of today‘s monastery of St. Étienne, thereby initiating a wave of development in the area. It seems that the Garden Tomb cave was emptied of its original contents at that time and prepared for use as a Christian burial site—perhaps for the clergy of St. Stephen‘s church. The plan of the cave was adapted to the customs of the new occupants: in place of burial benches on which to lay the deceased, burial troughs were cut out, and Christian symbols were daubed on the walls in red paint.

Still later, in the Middle Ages, the area of the Garden Tomb became a stable for the mules and donkeys of the Crusaders. To this stage, we may attribute the water cistern in the court of the Garden Tomb, as well as the soft limestone figurines of horsemen found by Beckholt in his excavations. During this period a series of vaults was built against the escarpment into which the cave is hewn. The vaults were built to create a complex of mule stables used by the Crusaders. In order to create vaults that were high enough, but would not extend above the escarpment, the Crusader builders lowered the rock surface in front of the cave entrance. As a result, today one must step up to enter the caves. Outside the entrance to the cave, a channel was cut into the rock face; this channel was most probably used in connection with the Crusader complex of vaulted structures. This late rock-cut channel was subsequently identified by 19th- and early 20th-century defenders of the authenticity of the Garden Tomb as the groove for the rolling stone covering Jesus‘ burial cave mentioned in the Gospels (Matthew 27:60).

m. The escarpment runs generally north-south, winding northwest as it continues northward into the courtyard of the Monastery of St. Étienne. At the end of this northwest bend, in the courtyard of St. Étienne, lies the entrance to Burial Cave Complex Number 1—the most elaborate burial cave known from the period of the kings of Judah.

1. Conrad Schick, “Notes, Mr. Schick‘s Work at Jerusalem” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (*PEFQS*), 1874, p. 125.

2. Schick, “Gordon‘s Tomb,” *PEFQS*, 1892, pp. 120–124.

3. James Edward Hanauer, “Model of a Columbarium. An Alleged Model of a Sanctuary from the Garden Tomb Grounds,” *PEFQS*, 1904, pp. 143–145.

4. Père Louis-Hugues Vincent, “Garden Tomb, Histoire d‘un Mythe,” *Revue Biblique* 32 (1925), pp. 401–431. Vincent argued that the tomb was Byzantine. Among those who dated it to the Second Temple period are Schick, Sir Flinders Petrie and Dame Kathleen Kenyon.

5. W. S. McBirnie, *The Search for the Authentic Tomb of Jesus* (Montrose, California: Acclaimed Books, 1975).

6. Amihai Mazar, “Iron Age Burial Caves North of Damascus Gate Jerusalem,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 26 (1976), pp. 1–8.

7. Kloner, “A First Temple Period Burial Gave at Sobah,” *Hadashot Archaelogiot* 78–79 (1982), pp. 71–71 (in Hebrew).

## The Garden Tomb and the Misfortunes of an Inscription

1. “Notes and News,” *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* (*PEFQS*), 1890, p. 3.

2. The ins and outs of the affair are detailed with mordant Gallic humor by Louis-Hugues Vincent, “Garden Tomb. Histoire d‘un mythe,” *Revue Biblique* 34 (1925), pp. 401–431.

3. Joseph Germer-Durand, “Nouvelles Archéologiques de Jérusalem,” *Cosmos*, No 235 (July 27, 1889), p. 453.

4. Edward Hull, letter in *PEFQS*, April 1890, p. 125.

5. James Edward Hanauer, “Notes on the Controversy Regarding the Site of Calvary,” *PEFQS*, October 1892, pp. 307–308.

6. This letter is reprinted in *PEFQS*, January 1893, pp. 80–81, together with a selection of the letters published by the *Times* in response (pp. 81–89).

7. Claude R. Conder, Letter to *Times* reprinted in *PEFQS*, January 1893, p. 82.

8. Marie-Joseph Lagrange, *Saint Étienne et son sanctuaire à Jérusalem* (Paris: Picard, 1894).

9. Robert Macalister, “The Garden Tomb,” *PEFQS*, July 1907, p. 232.

10. Quoted in Vincent, “Garden Tomb,” p. 422.

## Jerusalem Tombs from the Days of the First Temple

a. See “On the Shorter Inscription From the ‘Tomb of the Royal Steward,‘“ David Ussishkin, *BASOR* 196 (1969), p. 18.

b. *Excavations and Surveys in Israel*, Vol. 1, 1982 (Jerusalem Israel Ministry of Education and Culture, Department of Antiquities and Museums).

c. See Magen Broshi, “Estimating the Population of Ancient Jerusalem,” **BAR** 04:02.

d. See Gabriel Barkay, “The Divine Name Found in Jerusalem,” **BAR** 09:02.

## All in the Family

a. The Gospel of the Nazarenes is an early Jewish-Christian gospel, now known only in a few quotations in works by ancient Christian writers.

b. The list in John 19:25 reads as follows: “[Jesus‘] mother and his mother‘s sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” This could be read as a list of four women. Most likely, however, there are only three. “Mary of Clopas” is probably in apposition to “his mother‘s sister.” If Mary of Clopas was Clopas‘s wife, then she was in fact Jesus‘ mother‘s husband‘s brother‘s wife—a relationship that, not surprisingly, the evangelist has preferred to state less precisely as his mother‘s sister.

c. We know of this event only from Julius Africanus, who says that Herod attempted to obscure his own non-Jewish origins by destroying the record of others' Jewish descent.

d. Kokhaba is most likely the Galilean village of that name (modern Kaukab), about 10 miles north of Nazareth.

1. Protoevangelium of James 19:3–20:4; Gospel of Philip 59:6–11; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78.8.1; 78.9.6.

2. For a recent argument, by a Roman Catholic New Testament scholar, that this is the most probable implication of the New Testament evidence, see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991–1994), vol. 1, pp. 316–332, and "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus in Ecumenical Perspective," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992), pp. 1–28. For a critique of Meier's arguments, see Richard Bauckham, "The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus: An Epiphanian Response to John P. Meier," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994), pp. 686–700.

3. Protoevangelium of James 9:2, 17:1–2, 18:1; Infancy Gospel of Thomas 16:1–2; Gospel of Peter, according to Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 10.17.

4. Quoted in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* (*Hist. Eccl.*) 2.23.4; 3.11; 3.20.1; 4.22.4.

5. Quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.11; 3.32.6; 4.22.4.

6. The other is an Aramaic document from the early second century C.E., found at Murabba'at (Mur. 33, line 5).

7. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20.9.1. The more legendary account in Hegesippus agrees that he suffered death by stoning.

8. Quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.7.14.

9. In my *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), chap. 7, I argue in detail that the Lukan genealogy of Jesus derives from the circle of the brothers of Jesus, who adapted a traditional family genealogy to make it the vehicle of a quite sophisticated christological message.

10. According to E.M. Smallwood ("Atticus, Legate of Judaea Under Trajan," *Journal of Roman Studies* 52 [1962], pp. 131–133), the martyrdom may be more firmly dated to either between 99 and 103 C.E. or between 108 and 117 C.E.

11. Quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.19.1–3.20.7; 3.32.5–6. The brothers' names are preserved not in Eusebius's quotations from Hegesippus but in another ancient summary of Hegesippus's account of them (Paris *MS* 1555A and Bodleian *MS* Barocc. 142).

12. Apart from the information that members of the third generation of the family of Jesus were still active in Christian leadership, the most interesting aspect of the story is what it tells us about the farm that the brothers held in partnership. The size and value given are so precise that it is likely that they rest on accurate detail. The farm was not divided between the brothers but owned jointly, no doubt because this family continued the old Jewish tradition of keeping a small holding undivided as the joint property of the "father's house," rather than dividing it between heirs. So, two generations back, this farm would have belonged to Joseph and his brother Clopas. Unfortunately, since the plethron has two possible sizes, it seems impossible to determine whether the farm was about 12 or 24 acres. In either case, this is not much land to support two families, and Joseph had at least seven children to feed. It is not surprising that he (and later Jesus) supplemented the family income by working as a carpenter.

13. The Franciscan excavators discovered a fourth-century mosaic bearing the inscription "Gift of Conon, deacon of Jerusalem" at the entrance to the cave beneath the Church of the Annunciation. They speculated that the cave was dedicated to the local cult of Conon, the martyred gardener, and that a later gentile Christian from Jerusalem dedicated the mosaic out of reverence for his namesake, who was honored there.

14. Readers wishing to study the relatives of Jesus more fully can turn to my longer studies: *Relatives of Jesus*, esp. chaps. 1–2; "Salome the Sister of Jesus, Salome the Disciple of Jesus, and the Secret Gospel of Mark," *Novum Testamentum* 33 (1991), pp. 246–254; "Mary of Clopas (John 19:25)," in G.J. Brooke, ed., *Women in the Biblical Tradition* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992), pp. 231–255; "James and the Jerusalem Church," in Bauckham, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*.